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AHOM-MUGHAL RELATIONS : A STUDY IN DIPLOMATIC HISTORY (1600-1663)

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PREFACE

Our work deals with Ahom-Mughal diplomatic relations from 1600 to 1663 A.D. Although studies on the general history of the period are there in a number of works, the subject of our investigation do not appear to have been the subject of detailed investigation at the hands of scholars so far. Ours is a modest attempt at filling a gap in the study of diplomatic history.

This thesis deals with the armed conflict between the Ahoms and the Mughals and their diplomatic relations at different stages of the Seventeenth century till 1663. After the annexation of Koch Kingdoms to the Mughal empire, Assam bore the brunt of Mughal imperialism which eventually led to serious hostilities. In the course of the description of these hostilities some references have been made in regard to the Koch-Mughal wars and their impact on Assam. I have endeavoured to focus the details of the wars and also the nature and working of Ahom diplomacy in relation to their Mughal counterpart. The prolonged hostilities produced great impact on the people of Assam in their political, social, religious and economic life. In view of this reason, emphasis has been laid on the history of the Ahom Kingdom of Assam - its social and political system including the diplomatic ties that the Ahoms maintained with the Mughals.

This contains eleven chapters. The first chapter deals with introduction giving historical background and also the brief history of the Ahoms.

The second chapter deals with the consolidation of Mughal power in Bengal, Koch-Mughal relations and annexation of Koch Kingdoms of Koch Behar and Karrup to the Mughal empire.

The third chapter deals with the circumstances leading to the Ahom-Mughal rivalry followed by armed conflict.

- The fourth chapter contains a brief description of the struggle in Kamrup.

The fifth chapter deals with the rebellion of the Koch Chiefs and the hill Rajas in south Kamrup (Dakhinkol) and the Ahom intervention in favour of the native rulers.

Chapter six deals with fresh rebellion in different parts of Koch territory - the Ahom intervention in Dakhinkol, consolidation of Mughal authority in Kamrup and diplomatic efforts for restoration of peace.

The seventh chapter deals with the renewal of Ahom-Mughal hostilities leading to the Mughal victory and the conclusion of the treaty of 1639.

The eighth chapter deals with the maintenance of diplomatic relations and the Ahom conquest of Farup.

Chapter nine deals with Mir Jumla's invasion of Assam and the defeat of the Ahoms.

The tenth chapter deals with the Ahom system of diplomacy and its application in the Ahom-Mughal conflict. It is followed by a concluding chapter.

The study is based on an analytical study of both published and unpublished sources.

While preparing this work, use was made of the materials as available in the office of the Director, Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Assam. I also collected materials from the National Library, Calcutta, the Gauhati University Library, Assam State Central Library, Assam Legislative Assembly Library, and the Meghalaya State Central Library. Besides these, some published books of eminent authors and unpublished documents collected from individual sources helped me to a great extent in writing my thesis.

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the 24 November 1982

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GOVINDA BALLAV GOSWAMI

ABBREVIATIONS

J.B.O.R.S.	Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society
J.A.S.B.	Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal
J.A.R.S.	Journal of the Assam Research Society

C H A P T E R - I

INTRODUCTION

At the close of the Sixteenth century A.D., the Ahom Kingdom of Assam lying at the extreme north-eastern frontier of Mughal India stretched from Sadiya in the east up to the river Barnadi in the north-west and the river Kalong in the south-west. It was closely bordered on the north by a range of mountains inhabited by the Bhutanese, the Akas, the Daflas and the Jhors; on the east by another line of hills inhabited by the Mismis and the Singphos; on the south by the Patkai, Naga, Khasi and the Garo Hills.¹ Due to these natural barriers, Assam was practically impervious to foreign invasions from these directions. In the west it merged in the plains of the Koch Kingdom across the Barnadi and the Kalong rivers. Thus the Kingdom of Assam roughly corresponded to the modern districts of Pirbugarh, Sibsagar, Nowgong, Darrang and Lakhimpur comprising the entire Brahmaputra valley from Sadiya to the neighbourhood of Guwahati. The successive advances of the Assam Kingdom had been westward and the rivers Barnadi,

¹Bhuyan, S.K., Anglo-Assamese Relations, p.1.

Manas (Manaha), and Sankosh had been the boundary between Assam and its Koch Behar or Mughal India in different ages. In spite of geographical barriers, successive streams of migration took place into this land through the mountain passes and 'duar's (passes) in the north and the north-east. The river Brahmaputra which was navigable throughout the year served as a means of communication between Assam and the rest of India. Since the age of the Epics, Assam was known by different names such as Pragjyotisha or Kamrupa and it had been maintaining political, cultural and commercial contacts with the rest of India as well as other lands in the east and the west.² The present Assamese society is the synthesis of diverse racial cultures and forms basically a part of Indian cultures and traditions.³

The Ahoms are members of the 'Shan' branch of 'Tai' or 'Thai' family of the Mongoloid race. Legend had it that, Khunlung and Khunlai, the two brothers were asked by their grand father, Lengdan (Indra) to

²Basu, N.K., Assam in the Ahom Age, p.2. (Reproduced from Dr. V.S. Agarwalla - All India Oriental Conference, 22nd Session, Gauhati, 1963, pp.1 ff).

³Choudhury, P.C., The History of Civilization of the People of Assam to the Twelfth century A.D., p.118.

come to earth from heaven to establish a Kingdom. They were presented with an idol called 'Somdeo' or magic sword or Hengdan. The Ahoms, however, did not originally claim heavenly origins. Padmeswar Gogoi says, "In the Brahmaputra Valley alone they were looked upon as 'born of the gods' (deo-hans) by the local people, either from their superior physique or from their superior might. The Ahom dynasty is called "Indravamsi" by the Brahmins and hence heavenly."⁴

Prince Sukapha, a descendant of Khunlung and Khunlai left his native state of Manlung in upper Burma with his followers about the year 1215 A.D. after some quarrels with his Kinsmen. For thirteen years Sukapha wandered about the hilly country of Patkai. It divides Assam from upper Burma. He crossed over to this territory which came to be known as Assam. The date of his conquest has been widely accepted to be 1228 A.D.⁵ Gradually they extended their territory after subjugating the local Chiefs, the Barahis and the Morans who were in possession of the neighbouring territories. After wondering from place to place in

⁴Gogoi, P., The Tai and the Tai Kingdoms, p.542.

⁵Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.2.

search of a suitable habitat to settle down, Sukapha arrived at Charaideo in 1253 and built a city there.⁶ He wisely adopted a conciliatory policy towards the conquered tribes by treating them as equals and by encouraging intermarriage he welded them all into one nation.

Sukapha and his followers left their womenfolk in their Shan homeland since they were regarded as unfit to undertake the rigours of long journey. Thus, Sukapha and his followers took to marrying girls from among the conquered tribes.⁷ These tribes used to supply various forest products, such as elephants, dye, honey and mats in lieu of revenue to the Ahom King.⁸

S.K. Bhuyan, on the authority of Harakanta Barua, says that the vanquished Morans and the Barahis also accepted both Sukapha and his followers as men of divine origin. Hence nobody was 'sama' or equal to them and they could be designated as 'a-sama' or 'unparalleled'.⁹ It is generally believed that the word

⁶Gait, E.A., A History of Assam, p.79.
Barua, Harakanta, The Assam Buranjī, p.12.

⁷Bhuyan, S.K., Deodhai Asom Buranjī, p.99.
Gait E.A., Op.cit., p.79.

⁸Gait, E.A., Op.cit., p.79.

⁹Bhuyan, S.K., Anglo-Assamese Relations, p.3.

'Assam', the name of the State is derived from this circumstance and that Ahom is a corruption of the word - 'A-Sam' as in the Assamese language, the sibilant 'S' in many cases becomes an aspirate 'H'. Others hold the view that Assam is so called because of the uneven character of the State, composed as it is of hills and plains.¹⁰ The latest view as offered by Padmeswar Gogoi is that 'Assam', the name of the country is from 'A-sam', the country of the 'Sams' which was later Sanskritised into 'A-Sama' from which the forms 'Asom' and 'Ahom' gradually arose.¹¹ The Ahoms called Assam 'Mungdunsukham' the country full of golden gardens because of abundance of natural wealth and beauty.¹²

The period from the Thirteenth to the Fifteenth century is marked by consolidation of Ahom power over the neighbouring tribes. Besides the Borahis and the Morans some Naga tribesmen and Kacharis were brought under their domination. The real expansion of the Ahom Kingdom began from the Sixteenth century. Suhungmung Dihingia Raja (1497 - 1539 A.D.) annexed the Kingdom

¹⁰Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit. p.3.

¹¹Gogoi, P., Op.cit., p.19.

¹²Gait, E.A., Op.cit., p.80.

of the Chutias centering round their capital Sadiya after a fierce fighting. A new officer of the State, known as the 'Sadiya Khowa Gohain' was appointed to administer this new conquered territory.¹³ The Bhuyan Chieftains who had been ruling in the north bank of the Brahmaputra were brought under Ahom control and made to settle in Bardowa in Nowgong; though their complete subjugation was effected a hundred years later.¹⁴ In 1526, Suhungmung marched against the Kacharis in the Dhansiri valley. The Kachari resistance was crippled and they were driven out from their stronghold at Dimapur. A new official, called the 'Marangikhowa Gohain' was appointed for the newly acquired territory in the Dhansiri valley, north of the river Kalang.¹⁵

The reign of Suhungmung witnessed the emergence of the new Kingdom of Koch Behar on the ruins of Kamata Kingdom on the western frontier of Assam. Biswa Singha, the founder of this new Kingdom visited the Ahom Raja in 1537 as a friendly mission and offered presents.¹⁶ And nearly for one hundred and fifty years the relations

¹³Gait, E.A., Op.cit., p.89.

¹⁴Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.4.

¹⁵Gait, E.A., Op.cit., p.99.

¹⁶Ibid., p.98.

between Koch Behar and Assam depended on each others' destiny. Envoys were also sent to the Raja of Manipur and presents were exchanged.

The first Mohammedan expedition to Assam under the great Uzir took place in 1527. E.A. Gait, on the authority of 'Riyazus-Salatin' says that the invader was probably Sultan Hussain Shah of Gaur.¹⁷ Ahom history simply records his name as Uzir.¹⁸ S.N. Bhattacharya identifies him with Rukunuddin Ruku Khan who was the wazir and general of Hussain Shah.¹⁹ The Mohammedan force was driven out with heavy losses after being hotly pursued by the Ahoms. Soon thereafter, the invaders renewed their attacks, reinforced by another general, Bit Malik with an army of one thousand horses and fifteen thousand soldiers.²⁰ The combined forces, one under the command of the Uzir advanced by boats up the river Brahmaputra while the other under Bit Malik marched by road, attacked the Ahom forces of Barpatra Gohain at Temani. The attack was repulsed and the Mohammedan Commander, Uzir fled. This was followed by more encounters at Sala, Singri and Khagarijan. At last the

¹⁷Gait, E.A., Op.cit., pp.91-92 (foot-note).

¹⁸Bhuyan, S.K. Deodhai Asom Burajni, pp.28-29.

¹⁹Bhattacharya, S.N., Mughal North-East Frontier Policy, p.86.

²⁰Bhuyan, S.K., Deodhai Asom Buranji, pp.28-29.

invaders were defeated and their Commander, Bit Malik was slain. Horses, cannons, guns, boats etc. were seized by the victorious Ahom force.²¹

Another Muslim invasion under Turbak took place in 1532 and they advanced up to the fort of Singri on the north bank of the Brahmaputra. The Ahom army after its initial reverses regained its position. After nearly one year of fighting, the Ahoms gained a decisive victory at Daimunisila, the invaders under Turbak were subsequently reinforced by Hussain Khan, but the Ahoms again defeated them in a series of engagements. The last battle was fought near the Bharali river. Turbak fell fighting. The defeat became a rout and the fugitives were pursued as far as the river Karotoya, evidently through the Koch territory. The Koch Raja Biswa Singha wisely did not intervene in the pursuit. Hussain Khan was killed in course of the chase.²² To commemorate the victory, a temple was erected and a tank excavated on the bank of the Kortoya by the Ahoms. The Ahom Commanders sent envoys to the court of the Padshah of Gaur and they brought back a

²¹Gait, E.A., Op.cit., pp.93-94.

²²Barua, K.L., Early History of Kamrupa, pp.193-194.

princess for the Ahom King. As a mark of victory, Suhungmung performed the 'Rikkhvan' ceremony.²³ The diplomatic relations that had been established by the Ahoms with the Padshah of Gaur testifies to the fact that the invasion was the work of some other Mohammedan Chiefs of Bengal. The results of these Muslim invasions were very significant for the history of Assam. The Mohammedan prisoners of war were settled in parts of the country. They were later employed as grass cutters to the elephants, cultivators and makers of brass utensils.²⁴ These people gradually mixed up with the Assamese by embracing the latter's culture and language. Another important result was the adoption of the use of fire-arms by the Ahoms which they learnt from the Muslim invaders. Till then, the weapons of war had mainly consisted of swords, spears, bows and arrows.²⁵

Having expelled the Mussalmans beyond the river Kartoya, the Ahom generals allowed the ruler of Koch Behar to continue as before since it was not the object of Ahom expedition to occupy the subdued territories.²⁶ Undoubtedly the victory was a great landmark in the annals of Ahom

²³Gait, E.A., Op.cit., pp.95-96.

²⁴Barua, Harakanta, History of Assam, p.28.

²⁵Gait, E.A., Op.cit., p.96.

²⁶Bhuyan, S.K., Atan Buragohain and his times, p.7. (1st edn. 1957).

foreign policy. Since then the Ahoms looked upon the Kartoya as the extreme western limit of their dominion. However, there had been no attempt on the part of the Ahom monarch to extend their sway over the Koch territory, although Ahom's Suzerainty was much felt there for sometime. Consequently the western boundary of Assam underwent many changes and the river Manas (Manaha) which falls into the river Brahmaputra opposite Goalpara town remained as the western boundary of Assam for a long time.²⁷

During the reign of Naranarayan (1540-1584 A.D.), son of Biswa Singha, Koch Behar reached the climax of its power. Accompanied by his brother Sukladhvaj alias Chilarai, Naranarayan entered into a career of conquest and advanced as far as the Dikroi river along the north bank of the Brahmaputra. The Ahoms acknowledged Koch suzerainty at least temporarily. Soon thereafter, however, the Ahom King Suklengmung mobilised all his forces and brought the Koches to bay - after several encounters. Suklengmung thus regained his lost territories on the north bank of the Brahmaputra. To mark this victory, he performed the Rikkhvan ceremony.²⁸ This

²⁷Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.27.

²⁸Gait, E.A., Op.cit., p.100.

invasion was followed by fresh Koch invasions under Chilarai in the reign of Khora Raja (Sukhampha - 1552 - 1603). A terrible battle ensued on the north of the river Dikhau and therein the Ahoms were routed. The Ahom King and his nobles fled to Namrup. After this victory Chilarai entered Gargaon, the capital of the Ahom kingdom. Peace however, was soon concluded between Chilarai and Akhek Buragohain, the Ahom plenipotentiary. Khore Raja acknowledged Koch Suzerainty, agreed to pay war-indemnity and ceded a considerable tract of the conquered territories on the north bank of the Brahmaputra. Many sons of the nobles 'including Sundar Gohain were sent to the Koch court as hostages. Later, the Ahoms recovered their lost territories and in 1564, the hostages were returned back. In order to maintain friendly relations, Naranarayan sent numerous presents and a friendly letter to the Ahom King.²⁹ This was necessitated by a desire to count the assistance of the Ahoms in case of Muslim invasion. The invasion had, in the meantime taken place under Kalayahar resulting in the sack of the temple of Kamakhya in 1564. The Mussalmans however, hastened back to Bengal after this invasion.

²⁹Gait, E.A., Op.cit., p.56.

Chilarai died about the year 1578 and on his death the Koch Kingdom was divided into two portions in order to accommodate the demands of Raghudev, son of Chilarai. The territory extending from Moharanda in the west to the river Sonkosh in the east was retained by Naranarayan himself while the eastern part from the Sankosh to the river Barnadi in the east was given to Raghudev on a tributary basis. Thus the western part came to be known as Koch Behar or Bar Dewan and the eastern portion as Kamrup or Saru Dewan or Koch Hajo (Hajo being the capital).³⁰

Lakhminarayan succeeded his father as King of Koch Behar and soon after trouble started between the two cousins. Not satisfied with his uncle's plan, Raghudev assumed independence and entered into hostilities with the Raja of Koch Behar. After Raghu's death his son and successor Parikshitnarayan continued the feud and as a result Lakhsminarayan appealed to the Mughal Emperor Akbar and then to Jahangir for help to protect him from the aggression of Parikshit. The inevitable result was the Mughal intervention in the affairs of Koch Behar. Lakhsminarayan was allowed to

³⁰ Phuyan, S.K., Anglo-Assamese Relations, p.4.

continue as a vassal ruler under the Mughals. By the year 1613, Kamrup was taken possession of by the Mughals after the defeat of Parikhshit. His brother, Balinarayan later sought the Ahom assistance which was offered. The Ahoms installed Balinarayan as a tributary Raja of Darrang which lay on the north bank of the Brahmaputra to the east of the Barnadi opposite to Guwahati.³¹ It also included the tract of the territory between Kajalimukh to Guwahati on the south bank.

The hostilities between the two Koch Kingdoms resulting in the Mughal occupation of Kamrup brought about far reaching consequences in the north east frontier of Mughal India. The contiguity of the frontiers of the two powerful states led to inevitable clashes and conflicts which continued for nearly thirty five years (1615-1639). Thus the history of the Ahoms of the Seventeenth Century was mainly the history of Ahom-Mughal conflicts which arose out of the ambitions of the Mughals to extend their sway further to the east beyond Bengal, the Ahom intervention in the affairs of the rival princes of Koch Behar and the determination of the Ahoms to check further advance of the Mughals.

³¹Gait, E.A., Op.cit., p.111.

Apart from these reasons, the violation of the treaty obligation entered into by them with the Mughals led to bitter rivalry in the diplomatic sphere. Thus the period from 1615 to 1682 was replete with events of political rivalry besides diplomatic intercourse.

It was during Pratap Singha's reign (1603-1641) that the first phase of the Ahom-Mughal conflict began. After several reverses in the early part of the hostilities, the Ahoms had to cede some territories on the west including Guwahati by the treaty of 1639.³² The territories which roughly correspond to the modern district of Kamrup thus passed into the hands of the Mughals. For nearly twenty years from the conclusion of the treaty, a period of comparative peace followed till the year 1658. Jayadhwaj Singha took advantage of the war of succession among the sons of Shah Jahan at Delhi and recovered the lost territories up to Sandu on the south bank of the Brahmaputra by expelling the Mughals upto the neighbourhood of Dacca.³³ The Mughals under Mir Jumla invaded Assam in 1662 and marched as far as Gargaon after overrunning the Koches. After

³²Bhuyan, S.K., Kamrupar Buranji (ed.), p.42 (printed - 1958). Gait, E.A., Op.cit., p.121.

³³Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.54.

Bhuyan, S.K. Atan Buragohain and his times, p.23.

this Mughal victory, a treaty was concluded in 1663 according to which Jayadhwaj Singha had to transfer Kamrup to the Mughals and promised to pay a war indemnity of twenty thousand tolas of gold and six times this quantity of silver and forty elephants to be handed over immediately besides hundred tolas of silver and ninety elephants payable within twelve months. Some Ahom princes were sent to the Mughal court as hostages and a prince was given to Prince Mohammad Azam, son of Emperor Aurangzeb. Jayadhwaj's successor, Chakradhwaj Singh (1663-1669) wrested back Kamrup from the Mughals in 1667 under the generalship of Lachit Barphukan. The Ahoms remained in undisputed possession of their territories till 1679 when Laluk Barphukan, the Ahom Viceroy of Guwahati entered into a collusion with Sultan Azamtara (Prince Azam), the Subedar of Bengal and made over Guwahati to the Sultan's Deputy, Nawab Mansur Khan. The Mughals were expelled across the river Manas during the reign of Gadadhar Singha in 1682. The river Manas remained as the western boundary of Assam till 1826.³⁴ Rangmati* became the headquarters

³⁴Bhuyan, S.R., Anglo-Assamese Relations, p.5.

* The place was situated on the bank of the river Gadadhar near its confluence with the Brahmagutra, not far from modern Dhubri.

of the 'fouzdar' who administered the frontier territories and conducted the diplomatic relations with Assam on behalf of the Subedar of Bengal.

The Ahoms were a martial race who could prevent the extension of the Mughal sway in the north east. They could establish a strong Kingdom in a foreign land because of their religious tolerance and political insight.³⁵ Although the Ahom rulers inherited the political ideology of their ancestors, later on, they came under the influence of the Hindu political ideology, the keynote of which was that the King should identify his happiness in the happiness of the people.³⁶

The Ahoms had realised the importance of keeping records of events of the reigns of Kings. These official records came to be called Buranjis or Chronicles. Sukapha said "the Pandits should write down all particulars, whenever an incident takes place, when a person dies and when we acquire new territories."³⁷

Ahom political ideology was based on the principles of unity, benevolence and justice. This is

³⁵Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.7.

³⁶Gait, E.A., Op.cit., p.242.

³⁷Bhuyan, S.K., Deodhai Asom Buranji, p.98.

evident from the advice given to Khunlung and Khunlai at the time of their departure to earth. "Just as a man loses his wife if he quarrels with his father-in-law and just as a mother bird guards her nestlings with her wings and protects them from rain and storm and rears them up by feeding them herself, so you two brothers should protect your subjects and desist from quarrelling with your friends and supporters."³⁸

The Ahom monarch had to act according to the advice of the three hereditary councillors of the state, viz., the Buragohain, the Bargohain and the Barphukan. However, a powerful monarch could override the decisions of the three Gohains and in the same manner an astute Gohain could impose his will upon his colleagues and upon the large bodies of Phukans and Paruas and even upon the King himself. Next to the three Gohains, was the Barbarua, the head of the executive and the judiciary and the Barphukan who acted as the governor of Lower Assam, his headquarters were first located at Kaliaber and later at Guwahati. The Barphukan conducted the political and foreign relations with Bengal and the Chieftains of the adjoining hill tracts.

³⁸Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.2.

The Council of five, known usually as the Patra-mantri, the Buragohain, the Bargohain and the Barpatragohain, the Barbarua and the Barphukan may be taken to correspond to the modern cabinet. Besides, there was a gradation of officers such as Phukans, Rajkhowas, Sandikois, Baruas, Hazarikas, Saikias, Boras etc..

All able-bodied adult male subjects were registered as 'paiks' and they had to perform specific services to the State, such as labourers and soldiers. The paiks were organised into 'gots' and 'Khel' according to the nature of duties. The 'Khels' were attached to several fields, namely, bow makers, bow-shooters, masketeers, gunpowder manufacturers, boat builders, rice suppliers, gold washers, elephant catchers, revenue collectors, temple supervisors etc..³⁹ In short, the Assamese paik system was like a vast tutorial organisation in an educational institution.⁴⁰ Thus the paik system of the Ahoms obviated the necessity of maintaining a huge army as the non-serving paiks constituted a standing militia which could be mobilised at short notice

³⁹Gait, E.A., Op.cit., pp.249 - 250.

Bhuyan, S.K., Anglo-Assamese Relations, p.10.

⁴⁰Bhuyan, S.K., Atan Buragohain and his times, p.17.

by the 'Kheldar'.⁴¹ There is a marked similarity between the Ahom Khel system and the Mughal 'mansabdari' system and it is likely that the Ahoms had taken the care from the Mughals whom they knew through their frequent political contacts. According to the 'mansabdari' system ranks were decided by the number of soldiers commanded by an officer, both Cavalry and infantry. There is also some similarity in the gradation of insignias. The Ahom Khel system was organised by Momai Tamuli Barbarua in 1609 A.D. under the direction of Swargadeo Pratap Singha.⁴²

Two other important functionaries of the state were the Katakis and the Pakatis. The Katakis served as envoys to the foreign courts and also as intermediaries between the King and the principal nobles. As the duties were of a highly important and responsible character, trained Brahmins were generally appointed as Katakis from amongst a number of selected families. The Pakatis served as writers and keeper of accounts.

Ahom policy with their frontier neighbours was generally based on the principle of mutual friendship

⁴¹Gait, E.A., Op.cit., p.251 (Reproduced from 'Aspects of the Heritage of Assam', p.91).

⁴²Bhuyan, S.K., Anglo-Assamese Relations, p.11.

and co-operation. Maintenance of commercial relations was also encouraged. Relations with the Muslim powers of Bengal and with Koch Behar were systematic and continuous, more so after Koch Behar came under the domination of the Mughals; on the other-hand relations with the hill tribes were casual and sporadic, as they had no territorial ambition and their trading activities were conducted on a minor scale.⁴³ It was the accepted policy of the Ahoms to take to apparently humiliating treaty terms in dealing with the powerful enemy if this could serve the best interest of the State. But when as soon opportunities arose, such terms were defied resulting in armed conflict. So contravention of treaty terms was not an unusual feature of the strategy of the Ahoms. They held the view that 'promises made under duress need not be fulfilled if such fulfilment puts the promiser state in a serious disadvantage.'⁴⁴

Assam had political relations with Mughal India, Koch Behar, Cachar, Jayantia, Dimarua, Khyrim, Shutan, Manipur, Tripura, Nara and Munkang States. Besides this, they maintained foreign relations with the principal

⁴³Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.23.

⁴⁴Ibid.,

hill tribes such as Daflas, Miris, Nagas, Khamptis, Singhhos and the Mismis. The Katakis who negotiated the relations were well-trained for this job. They were generally guided by the principles that in dealing with the more powerful enemy attack, as a preliminary step Katakis should be sent for friendly negotiations. To secure the withdrawal of the enemy, they should enter into a treaty and stick to it and observe it for some time and later defy it when sufficient forces are mobilised. During the Mughal invasion in 1638, the Ahoms with incomplete war preparations were compelled to adopt diplomatic methods in order to gain time for completion of their preparations. Accordingly, Katakis were sent to the enemy camp at Kajalimukh under royal instructions. The Katakis approached the enemy thus - "for what purpose the Nawabs come here? If they have come with the intention of war let them so inform us. But war is waged between the Padshahs and not between the common people like you and us. Therefore, we are ready to give you whatever you demand."⁴⁵ Under no circumstances, the enemy should be relied on. Weak enemies should be dealt with mercilessly and should not be given

⁴⁵Bhuyan, S.K., Kamrupar Buranji (ed.), p.40.

the opportunity to make peace.⁴⁶ The doctrine of 'danda-dama-bheda-danda' (conciliation, concession, rapture and force) was always practiced by the Ahoms in the conduct of diplomatic relations. Within the framework of the general policy, the Katakis had enough scope for exercise of discretion, originality and inventiveness; and on their powers of advocacy and exposition depended the proper settlement of grave issues. They carried written epistles which they had to explain and sometimes supplement by 'Mukh-javan' or oral-submission.⁴⁷ On many occasions they misrepresented the fact in such a manner that the Mughal Commanders were compelled to entertain dubious hopes of success against Assam. According to diplomatic norms, the Katakis were not responsible for the contents of the message they carried and were immune from the consequences thereof. Sometime the Katakis bringing bad news or messages not to the liking of the haughty monarchs or the nobles had to suffer ignominy. Strict honesty was enjoined on the Katakis. Based on these principles Pratap Singha maintained diplomatic relations with the Mughals. However, under his instructions several Katakis were executed for receiving gratification from Raja Dharmanarayan and from the Mughal Commander Raja Satrajit.⁴⁸

⁴⁶Goswami, S.C., Nitilatankur, pp.12, 13, 17.

⁴⁷Bhuyan, S.K., Anglo-Assamese Relations, pp.30-31.

⁴⁸Ibid.,

The importance of a class of skilled Katakis was first realised by Swargadao Pratap Singha. He replaced the Ahom Katakis by Brahmins who were considered to be shrewd. Once he explained to the Katakis about their duties in the following words :

"I am highly pleased with the manner in which you have conducted yourselves and asserted your views in a foreign place (Court of the Mughal Commander Allayar Khan). Katakis should be like Shieldmen. Your words alone constitute your rice and cloth; more specially the relations between ourselves and yourselves are like gold and borax; the former is refined with the help of the latter. You have been able to vindicate your cause in a foreign Durbar and thereby to protect the interests of your government, without paying any heed to your personal safety. Therefore, 'O Bamuniputeks', have I got anyone dearer to me than yourselves?"⁴⁹

During the period of Ahom-Mughal wars numerous diplomatic epistles were exchanged between the two powers. The Katakis who carried the epistles of the Ahom government were well versed in Persian language. The style of writing as well as the language of the epistles are unique from the literary point of view. The language is a curious mixture of Persian, Hindi and Assamese. Many Persians generally known as 'Parsiparhias' or Persian readers were attached to the Ahom Court. Their occupation

⁴⁹Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.31. (Reproduced from Assam Buranji No.7).

was deciphering and interpreting of Persian documents, drafting and supervision of the Persian correspondences of the government. The Persian chronicles of the Mughal Court throwing light on the Assam-Mughal conflicts of the seventeenth century are equally prolific. The series of epistles exchanged for nearly twenty years following the treaty of 1639 are of invaluable help in unfolding the eventful story of a forgotten era in the history of Mughal north east frontier policy - an era of peace, diplomacy and busy-trade and commerce with the Assamese which terminated only with the outbreak of the war of Succession (1658).

The Ahom Government strictly observed diplomatic etiquette with its Mughal counterpart. They also expected similar treatment from foreign powers. After the treaty of Ghilajharighat (1663), Emperor Aurangzeb sent two Ahadis (envoy) to Assam, Dor Beg and Ruston Beg, with the present of a 'Shirpao' for Swargateo Jayadhwaj Singha. But Jayadhwaj soon died. The Ahadis then offered the present to the new King Chakradhwaj Singha. The envoys insisted that the Ahom King should come forward from his throne to receive the 'Shirpao'. Atan Buragohain objected to this humiliating proposal

and said, "Should the slave of a Mughal speak in this fashion? Should we renounce the time honoured custom of the land and age-old diplomatic practices?" The articles were then deposited in the royal stores.⁵⁰

The Ahoms always stressed the doctrine of natural boundaries and they regarded the river Kartoya as the western boundary of Assam on the basis of the limits of ancient Hindu Kingdom of Kamrup. It was bounded on the west by the river Kartaya including roughly the Brahmaputra valley, Bhutan, Fangpur and Behar. Thus the ultimate territorial ambition of the Ahoms was to restore the old limits up to Kartoya and they succeeded at times in bringing parts of ancient territories under their sway.⁵¹

Suhungmung Dihingia Raja first extended his suzerainty up to the river Kartoya by expelling the Mohammedans who invaded Assam. It was nothing but an extension of the sphere of influence and the Ahoms did nothing to retain this boundary permanently. In 1658 King Jayadhwaj Singha extended his sway up to the river Manas after driving out the Mughals from Kamrup. The river Manas occupied a strategic position from the

⁵¹Bhuyan, S.K., Anglo-Assamese Relations, p.23.

military point of view, and fixation of western boundary at Manas (Manaha) was a voluntary contraction on the part of Assam.⁵² The second rallying point of the Assamese was at Guwahati with the hills on both banks of the Brahmaputra and then at Sandhara and Singalgarh with the same strategic advantage of hills and rivers. The Ahoms avoided contest in the plains as they had a meagre cavalry and the level regions were not found suitable for their guerrilla tactics. The invasion of Mir Jumla (1662-1663) changed the geographical limit of Assam. At a much later stage, King Rudra Singha expressed his desire before the nobles to restore the old limits of Assam up to the Kartoya. Even in his deathbed he hoped that his successors would honour his sentiment.⁵³

Dihingia Raja's expedition to Gaur took place during the days of the independent Afghan Sultans of Bengal and the Mughal first established their supremacy over that province in 1576. Till about 1614, the Ahoms had no quarrel with the Mughals but hostilities broke out in the following year as a result of Mughal encroachments and raised raids which Assam opposed. The war continued

⁵² Stewart, History of Bengal, p.317.

⁵³ Wade, J.P., An Account of Assam, (ed.) Genuddhar Sharma, p.146.

with varying fortunes till the year 1639 when a treaty was concluded according to which lower Assam from Guwahati to Manaha passed into the hands of the Mughals. The first and second phases of the struggle of this period were mainly confined in Kamrup, both in 'Uttarkol' and 'Dakhinkol'. The wars in Dakhinkol were mainly a story of the struggle of resistance by the local chiefs against the Mughal invasion. In 1658 the Ahoms recovered their lost territories; ceded it again in 1663 and regained it in 1667 by Lachit Barphukan. The Ahom Viceroy at Guwahati, Laluk Barphukan treacherously surrendered lower Assam to the Mughals in 1679, only to oust the Bura Gohain with whom he had personal enmity. The Bar Phukan vainly expected to be the ruler of Assam with the help of the Mughals. Finally in 1682, the Ahoms were able to recover the territories upto the river Manaha which remained the boundary of Assam till the termination of their rule.

The Ahoms remained ever vigilant over the activities of the Mughals. In normal peace time they were on friendly terms. This was evident from the exchange of visits of the envoys from both sides. But the Ahoms were always apprehensive of the Mughals on their territory and as such they remained on alert

with full armed preparations to deal with the enemy as and when occasions arose. Assam's hostilities with the Mughals were almost always successful and the latter admitted the difficulties of a war against Assam in view of natural disadvantage combined with the intrepidity of the Assamese generals.⁵⁴ The ultimate issue of the Ahom Mughal conflict was greatly determined by the geography of this region. A study of the details of the wars, the route of the march, the plan of operations, the tactics employed by the combatants and even the nature and number of engagements bears unmistakable evidence of the influence of the geographical factor.⁵⁵

The Mughal's attitude towards Assam was influenced partly by their traditional policy of imperialism and partly by their desire to obtain an access to the forests of Assam which were full of elephants and 'agar' wood and other precious articles.⁵⁶ Their policy of imperialism shows different tendencies on different occasions. At the beginning of their contact with Assam, the Mughal policy was based on securing economic advantages, such as trade facilities and the availability of the natural resources of Assam for the Mughals. It would, however,

⁵⁴Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.26.

⁵⁵Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., p.42.

⁵⁶Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.26.

be wrong to presume that the policy of intervention was the outcome of a deliberately calculated policy to extend Mughal suzerainty over the area occupied and administered by the Koches. The occupation of Kamrup lay in the logic of circumstances. The close proximity of Kamrup with the Empire and the latter's intervention in the affairs of the rival Koch Kings of Koch Behar and Kamrup ultimately brought Kamrup into conflict with the Mughal. All the Mughal campaigns either into Koch Kingdoms or Assam were conducted at the initiative of the viceroys of the Bengal Subah. Emperor Jahangir and his successor Shah Jahan took little interest in the north east frontier of Bengal. Emperor Aurangzeb viewed the north east in a somewhat different light. Mir Jumla was despatched to Assam only to get rid of a formidable rival to the Emperor. Many of the conflicts of the pre-Mir Jumla period were the outcome of either deliberate actions of the Mughal officers of Hajo or mishandling of the diplomatic relationship. This is evident from the role of Raja Satrajit, the Commander of the Mughal thana of Randu. Assam's name for Mughal strategy was 'Mughal-fard', which they tried to thoroughly master through Assamese messengers and agents despatched to Mughal India, both

in authorised and unauthorised manner; and also through Mughal subjects who stayed on in Assam after the departure of the expeditions to which they were attached.⁵⁷

At the beginning of the foundation of the Kingdom of Koch Behar by Biswa Singha, The Ahoms looked upon the Koch Raja as belonging to the category of 'thapita-chanchita' - a name applied to the rulers who were first settled by the Ahoms in the government of a particular state. Naranarayan and Chilarai, two sons of Biswa Singha rejected the Ahom authority and rather went to the extreme step of invading Assam. At a subsequent period, two Koch princes were installed as tributary Rajas in Darrang and Beltola states respectively. Cachar was another territory of 'thapita-chanchita' order, as after a brief interregnum, its ruler, Nirbhoynarayan, had been placed on the throne by Dihingia Raja.⁵⁸

There had been frequent friction between the Jayantia Raja and the Ahom monarch, but the latter forced the former to come to terms on many occasions. Matrimonial relations were also established between the two Kings as a mark of abiding friendship. The state of Pimaru, however, became the bone of contention as both of the

⁵⁷Bhuyan, S.K., Opc.cit. p.27.

⁵⁸Ibid., p.27.

rulers laid claims to it. The Ahom claim on Dimarua was based on their occupation of that principality after defeating the Mughals in early 1616 and again in 1667, by defeating Sayid Feroz Khan, Fouzdar of Guwahati.

The Ahoms adopted a conciliatory policy towards the neighbouring hill tribes. Occasionally, under compelling circumstances they had to apply force. But complete subjugation was never contemplated. The Ahoms were required to check the inroads of these tribes inhabiting the hills so as to protect their own subjects. Attempts were made to adjust the mutual relationship, but their strict observance could not be usually enforced as the tribesmen lived in inaccessible hills and forests.⁵⁹ The Ahoms appointed frontier officers to deal effectively with these tribes and to maintain friendly relations. The Sadiya Khowa Gohain was in-charge of the affairs of the tribes of the Sadiya region; the Marangi Khowa Gohain and the Rahial Barua of the Kacharis and Mikirs; the Jagiyalia Gohain and Kajalinukhia Gohain of the Tayantiyas. The Barphukan was responsible for maintaining relations with the Raja of Dimarua and the Chieftains of Dakhinkol. A number of officers well-versed in the languages, dialects,

⁵⁹Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.32.

customs and habits of these tribesmen were attached to these frontier officers. Whereas Brahman ambassadors were, as a rule, appointed to the states of western Assam; they were replaced by sturdy tribal experts in conducting negotiations with the bordering races, for in dealing with these tribesmen, namely, the Singphos, the Nagas, the Duflas, the Abors etc., there was greater need of a spirit of forbearance and understanding, sincerity and straightforwardness than of subtle logic, sophistry and propaganda.⁶⁰ That the Ahoms succeeded in maintaining cordial relations with the hill tribes is evident from the writings of the Mughal chronicles, Shihabuddin Talish who accompanied the Mir Jumla expedition. He wrote, "Although most of the inhabitants of the neighbouring hills pay no tax to the Rajah of Assam, yet they accept his sovereignty and obey some of his commands."⁶¹ Captain St. John F. Michell in his 'Report on the North-East Frontier, 1883' says, "The Assamese army appears at this time (1660) to have been largely recruited from the Nagas and the Miris, and it is evident that they were quite able to hold their own against the well-trained armies of Hindustan".⁶² Thus

⁵⁹Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.32.

⁶⁰Ibid., p.47.

⁶¹Ibid., p.47. (Reproduced from Sir J.N. Sarkar, J.B.O.P.S., 1915, pp. 184-185).

⁶²Ibid.

the Ahoms regulated their tribal policy in a realistic and judicious manner and at times they did not hesitate to apply force, lest the offer of friendship and good will should be interpreted as a manifestation of weakness and imbecility.

In the Seventeenth century, the Ahom rulers seem to have adopted a policy of isolation in regard to the commercial activities with the foreigners in a restricted form. They restricted the movement of their traders beyond the Assam 'Chowky'. The foreign traders were prohibited from entering into the Assam territory. The Assamese traders exchanged their goods, such as, gold, musk, agar, pepper, silk etc. for salt, saltpetre, sulphur and other articles carried on by the Mughal traders.⁶³ By these commercial intercourse, the Assamese traders could keep close watch on the movement of foreigners. During the early stage of the Ahom-Mughal contact, the Mughal traders, lured by the precious articles of Assam forests, illegally entered into Assam territory leading to frequent conflicts between the two powers. As the Mughal traders showed their keenness to establish commercial intercourse with the Assamese,

⁶³ Gait, Op.cit., p.274.

'hats' were arranged on the frontier for exchange of goods.

The Assamese traders were, however, not allowed to interfere in the administrative affairs. Three Assamese traders (Mudois) had once assured the Nawab of Dacca that they would establish friendly relations between the Nawab and the Ahoms. Accordingly they brought with them to Assam some diplomatic agents of the Nawab together with letters and presents meant for the Ahom monarch, Pratap Singha. The King accused the merchants thus, "They are merchants and as such should have confined themselves to trading activities. What business had they to bring envoys from Bengal?" The traders were later executed under orders of the monarch.⁶⁴

The Ahoms conducted their trading activities with the frontier tribes on a small scale. Protection was given to the traders by the frontier officials of the Ahom government known as 'Datiyalia Bisayas' and 'Ruarias'. The Ruaria Barua enjoyed the exclusive privilege of trade with Bengal at the later period of Ahom rule. Goalpara on the south bank and Jogighopa and Rangamati were the eastern outposts of Bengal whence its merchants maintained their trade relations with Assam.

⁶⁴ Bhuyan, S.K., Kamrupar Buranjī (ed.), p.28.

The frequent Mohammedan invasions from the time of Bakhtiyar Khilzi in 1205 A.D. to the final expulsion of the Mughals in 1682 made the Assamese averse to foreigners and considered them as a source of danger to the security of the nation. The security of the kingdom being the primary concern with the government, foreigners were admitted with great caution; but those who came to stay with the avowed purpose of serving the country in some capacity were given every facility to do so.⁶⁵ All people living in the countries to the west of Assam and entering into Assam through Bengal were called, 'Bangals' a term applied even to Europeans as Baga Bangal. But this term was also applied to those foreigners entertaining hostile designs against Assam. The fear of enemy attack from the western frontier compelled the Assamese to be suspicious of all foreigners. Assam was usually described as 'Sonar Saphura' or a 'casket of gold', the lustre of which must always be kept shining.⁶⁶

But there were exceptions to this rigid exclusion of strangers or foreigners. The Ahom rulers encouraged people from other parts of Hindustan to come and settle

⁶⁵Bhuyan, S.K., 'Atan Buragohain and his times', p.12.

⁶⁶Ibid.,

in Assam provided that their introduction was of advantage to the nation. After Hinduisation the Thoms began to take some interest in the religion and culture of India. They deputed Brahman priests to the shrines outside the state for making offerings. Political agents, mostly in disguise, were sent outside to study foreign customs, manners and also political behaviour. Scholars and saints, artisans and craftsman, clerks and accountants, both Hindu and Muslim, were freely admitted, and brought by special arrangement with the rulers of Hindustan as there was dearth of such men in Assam and considered them useful for cultural and economic development of the state. But these 'licensed foreigners' had to cut off all relations after coming into Assam. They, like other subjects of the state, were equally treated by the government and they had to learn Assamese language, manners and customs. The Assamese made a distinction between 'desirable foreigners' and 'undesirable foreigners.' The former category comprised those who came to stay and became naturalised. The latter category consisted of those who had no intention to stay permanently and upon whom the Assam government had no control.⁶⁷ Shihabuddin Talish gives a clear picture of the attitude of the Assamese people towards

⁶⁷Bhuyan, S.K., 'Anglo-Assamese Relations', p.57.

foreigners" - No Indian King in former times ever conquered Assam. Even the intercourse of foreigners and the Assamese was very limited. They allow no stranger to enter their territory."⁶⁸

The relations with the hill chieftains of the tract of the territories bordering the Khasi and the Garo Hills were very friendly with the Ahom rulers. These chiefs mostly belonged either to Jakhia or Garo tribes and ruled their territories as vassal paying moderate tribute to the Ahom Raja. In times of necessity they were protected by the Ahom ruler from external aggression. The Ahom intervention in the affairs of these hill Rajas of Dakhinkol came in the wake of Mughal invasions of the latter's territories in the course of the subjugation of Kamrup. These hill chieftains (Raja) are mentioned as 'Eighteen Hill Rajas' of 'Dakhinkol' Sarkar on the south bank of the Brahmaputra in the Koch territory of Kamrup, both in Persian chronicles and Assam Buranjis. The states of Darrang, Belitola and Rani enjoyed full autonomy in their internal administration like other vassal states. The Rani Raja paid no tribute to the Ahom monarch. The other states were, Luki, Boko,

⁶⁸ Blochmann, J.A.S.B., 1872, - Part I, 'Koch Behar and Assam.'

Barduwar, Bholagaon, Mirapur, Pantar, Pangaon, Bagaduwar, Dimarua etc.. In addition to annual tribute, they were required to furnish a stipulated number of paiks to the Ahom monarch in times of war. They remained under the control of the Ahoms from the reign of Pratap Singha till the end of the Ahom rule.⁶⁹

The Ahom kings granted some rights to these hill chiefs for the purpose of bartering their products at certain 'hats' or market places. The hillmen came to these places through some 'duwar's which were the gateways to the hills. This was required for maintaining peace in the frontier.

The Ahoms had a very efficient and well-disciplined army which could stem the tide of repeated Mughal invasions. The invincibility of the Assamese during the period of Mohammedan conflicts had led a writer to remark 'the Assamese were to the Moslems what the Numidians and Mauritians were to the old Romans'.⁷⁰ The Mughal Commander, Rashid Khan spoke of the Ahom army thus - "the enemy is beyond the reach of our heavy artillery; and there is no opportunity for fighting with arrows and guns. Their ministers, commanders and infantry are

⁶⁹ Rajkumar, S., 'Nilachal, 1963, 2nd issue, pp.229-302- 'Khasi Jayantia Parbatar Uttar Kasaria Raja 'ru Raja Nowali'.

⁷⁰ Bhuyan, S.K., Annals of the Delhi Badshahate (ed.) p.12. (Reproduced from The Religious History of Assam- Calcutta Review, 1867, vol. XLVI, p.78).

all to be admired for having constructed such an impregnable wall of defence."⁷¹

The king was the supreme commander of the armed forces. All officers from the highest to the lowest were liable to military service. The non-serving ranks constituted the standing militia. The army mostly consisted of infantry and elephants. The most noted animal from the standpoint of war and trade was the elephant. It had a prominent place in Koch and Assamese military array and occasional many a diplomatic and armed contest between the Mughals and the Assamese. According to the treaty of Chilaijharighat (1663), the Ahoms had to pay a war indemnity of rupees three lakhs and ninety elephants and an annual tribute of twenty elephants. A series of epistles were exchanged between Atan Buragohain and Pashid Khan, fauzdar of Guwahati regarding delivery of elephants to the Mughals. The failure to deliver the elephants and money within the stipulated time led to renewal of hostilities.

The performance of religious rites was customary to the initiation of a campaign. In the course of their campaign the Ahoms preserved and protected the cows

⁷¹Gait, E.A., Op.cit., p.252.

and Brahmans as there were standing royal instructions to do so. The Ahom art of fighting was unique. They constructed highly ingenious and impregnable fortresses which evoked admiration even from the hostile Mughals. Open encounters were supplemented by guerrilla fighting, in which the Ahoms were superb. They would only come out from their forts at night and fall on the enemies unnoticed. In the event of their repulse they would hurry back to retreats. By these tactics they nearly succeeded in thwarting the activities of Mir Jumla's army.⁷²

Striking were the naval achievements of the Assamese under Ahom rule. The naval engagements with the enemy at Kalaibar and Saraighat were noteworthy. At the end of the battle at Saraighat, the Mughal general Ram Singha had to acknowledge the valour and skill of his adversaries thus, "Every Assamese soldier is expert in rowing boats, in shooting arrows, in digging trenches and wielding guns and cannons. I have not seen such specimens of versatility in any other parts of India."⁷³

There had been frequent Mughal invasion in the north bank of the Brahmaputra valley from Dacca by

⁷²Gait, E.A., Op.cit., p.253.

⁷³Ibid.,

following the left bank of the Brahmaputra. But in southern Assam, the invading forces had to depend much on the flotilla of war-boats for their success. The Mohammedan invaders were so much impressed by the superior force of the Ahoms that they did not hesitate to record their appreciation about the Assamese. Mir Jumla wondered at the strength of the fortifications at Simalgarh. "Strong in their tribal unity, fierce in their independance, invigorated by a nourishing diet and buoyed up by an exhilarating drink, the Ahoms, in spite of many defects in their political and military system, ultimately got the better of the Mughals still in the hey-day of their prosperity and glory"⁷⁴ - Shihabuddin Talish, the author of *Fathiya-i-Ibrivah* describes beautifully the technique of the Ahom fort at Jogighopa in the following terms,

"It is a large and high fort on the Brahmaputra. Near it the enemy (Assamese) had dug many holes for the horses to fall into, and pointed pieces of bamboos (Panjis) had been stuck in the holes. Behind the holes, for about half a short distance, on even ground, they had made a ditch and behind the ditch, near the fort another one three yards deep. The latter was also full of pointed bamboos. This is how the Ahoms fortify all their positions. They make their forts of mud. The Brahmaputra is south of the fort and on the east is the Manas".⁷⁵

⁷⁴Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., p.46.

⁷⁵Gait, E.A., Op.cit., p.132.

During Mir Jumla's stay in Assam for ten months, the Mughals were subjected to endless suffering and harassment. They found the country of Assam 'wild and dreadful, abounding in danger - a land of unhealthy climate, witchcraft and pestilential diseases', as evident from the writings of the Mughal Chroniclers Talish. In spite of their sufferings and hardships, the Mughals remained in occupation of a vast area of the country. Seeing the plight of the Assamese subjects, Atan Buragohain expressed his sorrow and said "we cannot vanquish the Mughals in open warfare; but preservation of the country and protection of its subjects are the first necessity for the government." With this aim in view, the Ahoms accepted the peace proposal, although with extremely humiliating terms, but it was in conformity with the recognised principle of Ahom diplomacy.

The 'Daivajna astrologers' of the Ahom court played a vital role in the conduct of the military operations especially during the Ahom-Mughal conflicts. Astrologers were first stationed with the Ahom monarch at the capital, and later on the officers serving in lower Assam had expert astrologers attached to their respective staffs, as they had to be frequently consulted

as to the prospects of the Ahom force in projected encounters. Thus astrologers became an indispensable element in the establishment of the leading administrators and commanders stationed in different places.⁷⁶

The Ahom forces were supported by a strong espionage system. The commanders entrusted with the conduct of the military engagements could never be bribed or won over to the hostile camp. There were instances of voluntary desertion to the enemy's camp by men like Akhek Gohain, Baduli Phukan and Bejooloi Phukan, but these had no effect on the course of the war. Akhek who stayed as a fugitive in the Mughal camp, later deserted and furnished detailed information about the strategy of the Mughals. Ram Singha made repeated attempts to win over Lachit Barphukan and his commanders but here Mughal Rajput strategy failed while it had succeeded in many other parts of India.⁷⁷ To strengthen further the espionage system, the Ahom monarchs introduced

⁷⁶Bhuyan, S.K., Deodhai Ason Buranji(ed), p.VIII ff. Nahar and Kalia, two astrologers accompanied the Ahom troops to Hatisila led by Lapeti Phukan and Baduli Phukan in 1659. During Mir Jumla's invasion Jayachwaj Singha deputed two astrologers, Birat and Bharua to advise the Ahom commanders. The astrologers who took active role in the Ahom-Mughal conflicts during the period from 1667 to 1671, the names of Jyotirbhusan, Achyutananda Doloi and Ramkhari are very prominent. (Annals of the Delhi Padshahate p.11).

⁷⁷Bhuyan, S.K., Annals of the Delhi Badshahate, p.11.

a class of devoted and trusted officers from among their own clan, called the 'sajati' who were responsible for furnishing information relating to the conduct of the officers directly to the King. Instances are also not rare to indicate that the Mughal officers at Guwahati succeeded in utilising the services of the Brahman priests of Umananda and Kamakhya temples for the consolidation of the Mughal administration. The land grant made to the two Pujaris (priest) of Kamakhya by Allayar Khan and Hasan Khan, fauzdars of Guwahati (1639-1658) and later confirmed by Emperor Aurangjib in 1667 bear proof to the fact that these grants were made in consideration of the services rendered. Obviously the Mughals needed the help of these influential priests for consolidation of their sway in this strategic region of western Assam. Another Sanad was issued to the priests of Umananda in 1667 by the Emperor.⁷⁸ It is interesting to note that a Badshahi Fishery grant was issued to a priest of Kamakhya temple. The area of operation was as follows,

'On the south of the Brahmaputra, from the mouth of Khanajan (Khanamukh) under Sayari mouza within Palasbari circle to Simna (Rangagora Simna). On the north bank of the Brahmaputra, from the Agiathuti hill of Duk-Bansar mouza under Hajo circle to Hatimura hill of Bamundi village in the district of Kamrup.'⁷⁹

⁷⁸Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., pp.17-18.

⁷⁹Guwahati High Court Case, Civil Rule No.80 of 1973.

The Mughal Badshah Aurangzeb was a bigot and as such it is doubtful if he ever encouraged either the establishment of Hindu temples or patronised their priests.

The impression which the Assam expedition of Mir Jumla made upon the Mughals has been very graphically described by the Mohammedan historian, Muhammad Kazim, the author of the 'Alamgirnama' - "The Rajas of Assam have never bowed the head of submission and obedience, nor have they paid tributes or revenue to the most powerful monarch, but they have curbed the ambition and checked the conquests of the most victorious princes of Hindustan. The solution of a war against them has baffled the penetration of heroes who have been styled conquerors of the world."⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Bhuyan, S.K., 'Atan Buragohain and his times', p.32. (Reproduced from H. Vansittart, - 'A description of Assam from Alamgirnama' - Asiatic Researches, Vol. II, 1807, pp.179-180.

C H A P T E R - I I

MUGHAL INVASION OF KANPUR

Bengal became an integral part of the Mughal Empire after the defeat of Daud Kararani, the great Pathan hero in the battle near Rajmahal in 1576 A.D. Soon after that diplomatic relations were established between Emperor Akbar and King Narnarayan of Koch Behar. Both the monarchs thereby recognised each other's territorial integrity and mutual friendship. With this opened a new Chapter in the history of Mughal north-east frontier policy. The formation of such an alliance was, however, due mainly to political expediency. Many vanquished Afghan Chiefs of Bengal fled to the neighbouring state of Koch Behar for taking asylum there. Most of them started creating troubles in Bengal and posed a threat to the security of the province. Emperor Akbar wanted to check it with the co-operation of King Narnarayan. The latter also apprehended such troubles in his own Kingdom from these refractory Chiefs and refused such asylum.¹ As per the terms of the treaty Narnarayan assured his

¹Roy, A .C., History of Bengal, p.146.

counterpart not to extend any help to the Pathan rebels. Four years later, Naranarayan, with a view to pleasing Akbar and as a friendly gesture sent an envoy to the Imperial Court with rich presents. The visit of the envoy further confirmed their friendship. This led to greater understanding on both sides. Some de-throned Afgan Chiefs of Bengal and Orissa had re-established their hold in parts of East Bengal under the leadership of Isa Khan of Sonargaon. Because of the continuous threat of these rebel chiefs from the northern and eastern parts of Bengal, the Imperial government needed the co-operation and friendship of the neighbouring state of Koch Behar. On the other hand, Naranarayan, in his desire to have a powerful ally against the apprehended menace of the Ahoms, looked to the Mughals as a strong arm of defence against Assam.² So long as Naranarayan was alive, the Mughals respected this alliance (1578) based on perfect equality. However, the partition of the Koch Kingdom into two, viz. Koch Behar and Kamrup changed the political situation. Being contiguous to Bengal, it was natural that the Mughals first came into contact with the Kingdom

²Roy, A.C., Op.cit., p.147.

of Koch Behar. Towards the close of Akbar's reign the defensive alliance was transformed into a subordinate one - the King accepted the Mughal vassalage without, of course, any obligation as to the payment of tribute. Thus from 1596 to 1608 A.D. the Koches were compelled to make subordinate alliance with the Mughals due to internal feuds between the two Koch rulers.³

In 1594 A.D., Raja Man Singh was appointed Viceroy of Bengal and with this, the consolidation of Mughal authority in Bengal really began. In the following year he laid the foundation of a new capital at Rajmahal alias Akbarnagar for administrative convenience and political considerations.⁴ Rajmahal was considered to be a central place of Bengal province and it was expected that the local Chiefs could be effectively dealt with from this place. Man Singh could not follow a strong forward policy due to internal troubles in Bengal. His viceroyalty was a story of the struggle between the Mughals and the local rulers for supremacy. The authority of the Emperor continued

³Choudhuri, H.N., 'The Land Revenue Settlement of the Cooch Behar State', p.234.

Stewart, History of Bengal, pp.187-188.

⁴Roy Choudhuri, I, Bengal under Akbar and Jahangir, p.50.

to be resisted by powerful Bengal Chiefs, notable among them being Isa Khan of Sonargaon, Kedar Rai of Vikrampur, Pratapaditya of Jessore and Usman, the most powerful of all the Afgan Chiefs.

The restoration of the Afgans in Bengal was the burning passion of Usman in his life. He threw off his vassalage and along with Khwaja Soloiman, raided Orissa in 1592. This country had recently been conquered by the Mughal general Man Singh. The attack was however, repulsed by the Imperial general with all his vigour.⁵ Usman revolted again after sometime and defeated Maha Singh, son of Man Singh. On coming to know of it, Man Singh hurried back from Rajputana and inflicted a crushing defeat on the rebels. He remained constant source of danger till he was defeated in the battle of Neik Ujyal on March 12, 1612.⁶

It is, therefore, apparent that the Mughals could not follow an imperialist policy in the north-east frontier during the viceroyalty of Man Singh. He relinquished his office in 1606 and was replaced by Qutubuddin who died next year. His successor Jehangir Quli Khan, an old man, succumbed to the Bengal climate

⁵Stewart, History of Bengal, p.133.

⁶Beni Prasad, History of Jehangir, pp.207-208.

within a year of his assumption of office.⁷ Any way, the period from 1594 to 1606 A.D. was one of consolidation of Mughal authority in Bengal. The Mughal intervention in the affairs of Koch Behar is not to be viewed as an act of aggressive design only. This was due to political expediency and after Akbar's death, his son Jahangir simply carried out his father's policy.

Ever since the partition of the Koch Kingdom, into Koch Behar and Kamrup, the relations between the two rulers continued to be strained. Raghudev (1581-1603), King of Kamrup who was a tributary to Koch Behar, refused to pay tribute to his uncle, King Naranarayan. He went a step further, after his uncle's death (1584) by carrying on frequent plundering raids in the Koch Kingdom. This led to inevitable clashes between Lakshminarayan of Koch Behar and Raghudev of Kamrup.

During the reign of Akbar in 1596 A.D., Lakshminarayan, son of Naranarayan approached the Mughal viceroy of Bengal for help against his cousin, Raghudev. They met at Anandapur near Ghoraghat and concluded a treaty of subordinate alliance. To cement the bond of friendship, Lakshminarayan gave his sister Pravabati in

⁷ Beni Prasad, History of Jehangir, p.209.

marriage to Man Singh. In return Man Singh sent a detachment to Koch Behar apparently to resist the raids of Raghudev. It was a definite land mark in the history of Mughal north-east frontier policy.

E.A. Gait, on the authority of the Akbarnama states that Pravabati was the daughter of Lakhsminarayan.⁸

The observation appears to be wrong and in fact Pravabati was the sister of Lakhsminarayan.⁹ According to the terms of the treaty, Lakhsminarayan acknowledged Mughal suzerainty and Koch Behar thus became a vassal of the Mughal Empire.¹⁰

The Mughal force under the command of two Afghan officers met Raghudev in an open engagement. In the fierce struggle that ensued, the Koch king fought unaided and was defeated with heavy losses in men and materials. He was compelled to vacate Bahirbond, a Koch territory in 1597.¹¹ The Koch chronicles and Buranjis are silent about this event. The Koches thus had to continue this policy of subordinate alliance till the year 1608 A.D.

⁸Gait, E.A., J.A.S.B. - LXII Part, 1893, p.297, 'The Koch Kings of Kamrup'.

⁹Sarkar, Ambika, Koch Rajbansi Jatir Itihas, p.73.

¹⁰Roy, A.C., Op.cit., pp.146-147.

¹¹Bhattacharya, S.N., Mughals north-east frontier Policy, p.112.

The Koch Mughal alliance and the defeat of Raghudev at the hands of the Imperial forces compelled the former to seek the assistance of the Ahom monarch. The latter was also alarmed at the Mughal intervention in the affairs of the Koch Kingdoms.

It is not true that Raghudev ever made any friendly alliance with Isa Khan, the Afgan Chief of Sonargaon.¹² In fact he was afraid of this Afgan Chief and the later encouraged by the dissensions between the two Koch Kings took the first opportunity of invading south Kamrup.

There are conflicting accounts regarding diplomatic relations between Raghudev and Isa Khan. Gait, on the authority of Mohammedan writers states that, Isa Khan after fierce fighting, took from the Koches the whole country as far as Rangamati in the present Goalpara district of Assam.¹³ S.N. Bhattacharya narrates a different story about this incident. He says that the Mughals supported by Lakhsminarayan made an assault on the combined forces of Isa Khan and Raghudev in 1597

¹²Roy, A.C., Op.cit., pp.148-152.

¹³Gait, E.A., A History of Assam, p.63.

at Katrabari. The result was very disastrous to the Mughals. Isa Khan scored a brilliant victory. Purjan Singh, son of Man Singh was slain in the battle. A large number of Imperial soldiers including some Koch paiks were taken prisoner.¹⁴ The local Koch history does not refer to such incidents.

The incidents referred to, are two different incidents. The first one regarding the battle between Raghudev and Isa Khan might have occurred earlier while the second incident took place at a later stage. The fact remains that Isa Khan became a source of danger to both the Koches and the Mughals and he continued to consolidate his sway in the eastern part of Bengal. Apparently the Mughals and their protage, Lakshminarayan were alarmed at the recent victory of Isa Khan against Raghudev.

At this stage, Raghu's position was extremely precarious. He was surrounded by enemies. In these circumstances he was forced to seek the help of the Raja of Assam. Gunabhiram Barua says that Raghudev concluded a matrimonial alliance with the Ahom monarch by giving his daughter in marriage to the latter.¹⁵

¹⁴ Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., p.13.

¹⁵ Barua, G.R., Asom Buranji, p.47.

The Koch princess Sankala was given a dowry of two elephants, seven horses and a hundred domestics. The Ahom King Sukhampha in return presented to the Koch King twenty-two elephants and twelve horses.¹⁶ This alliance was a triumph of Raghudev's skillful diplomacy and wide statecraft. It marked the beginning of a new phase in the diplomatic history of Assam as well. The Ahom monarch viewed with alarm the growing Mughal intervention in Koch politics and realised the necessity of strengthening Kamrup as a buffer state. Another incident which prompted Raghu to come close to the Ahoms was that the Ahom monarch had given protection to some rebellious officers from Koch Behar. As a result the relations between the Ahom monarch and the Koch King Lakshminarayan became strained Raghu took the opportunity by offering his friendship with the Ahom monarch at a time when it was needed most.

Raghudev died about the year 1603 A.D. and was succeeded by his son Parikhsit narayan. In the same year, Susengpha, alias Pratap Singha ascended the Ahom throne. By the year 1603 - 1604 A.D., the turbulent

¹⁶Gait, E.A., Op.cit., pp.104-105.

Chiefs of Bhati were effectively crushed for the time being by the Bengal Government and there ensued a period of comparative peace in Bengal¹⁷ - and the adjoining areas. Raja Satrajit of Bhusna submitted to the Imperial power in 1609, entered into Imperial service and was confirmed in his possession of lands. By 1611, Musa Khan, son of Isa Khan, Chief of Bengal zamindars and his associates also laid down their arms. Usman, the Fathan hero was defeated in 1612.¹⁸ The political power of the Afgans and also the Hindu zamindars was destroyed but they were treated well by Emperor Jahangir. They were allowed to enter the services of the Imperial government with pleasure. "As a result of this humane policy", writes the author of *Makhzan-i-Afgani*, "the Afgans abolished all treasonable designs and remained loyal to the throne."¹⁹

The appointment of Islam Khan, a trusted friend of Jahangir as Viceroy (Subadar) of Bengal in 1607 A.D., to deal effectively with the rebel Chiefs of Bengal changed the political situation. After the departure of Man Singh in 1606, the Afgan Chiefs and their allies

¹⁷Roy Choudhuri, Tapan, *Bengal under Akbar and Jahangir*, p.50.

¹⁸Beni Prasad, *Op.cit.*, p.207.

¹⁹Iswari Prasad, *The Mughal Empire*, pp.428-429.

raised their heads again.²⁰ Islam Khan soon transferred the capital from Rajmahal to Dacca to cope with the increasing confusion arising out of the internal revolts. The extension of the Mughal territory in the east and the policy of bringing pressure on Kamrup necessitated the transfer of the capital to Dacca.²¹ The new viceroy was determined to extend the frontier in the north-east after the subjugation of Bengal. However it was hardly possible for the Bengal government to follow an aggressive policy and interfere in the affairs of Koch Behar prior to the year 1612 due to the troubled situation in the province. The Mughal viceroy was anxious to have a defensive alliance with the King of Koch Behar to check the Afgan fugitives in his Kingdom. The prolonged revolt of these chiefs caused much trouble to the Bengal government in consolidating its authority.

The two Koch Kings solicited the friendship of the Ahoms as there had been frequent wars between these two countries.²² But Parikhsit was prompt in securing the help of the Ahom Raja. He gave his daughter, Mangaldahi in marriage (1608 A.D.) to Pratap Singha.

²⁰ Beni Prasad, Op.cit., p.209.

²¹ Tripathi, R.P., Rise and Fall of the Mughal Empire, p.384.

²² Gait, E.A., Op.cit., p.65.

The latter gave twenty three elephants to Parikhsit who in turn sent with his daughter, six families of domestics and twenty female slaves.²³ The purpose of forming a matrimonial alliance was obviously to protect Kamrup from foreign aggression. The subsequent events show that both the Mughals and the Ahoms were not fighting for the cause of their proteges. They really fought for the establishment of their own predominance in the frontier. While the Mughals befriended their protege Lakhsminarayan, the Ahom King Susengpha, although entering into marriage alliance with Parikhsit remained indifferent when help was surely needed against the Mughals.

Lakhsminarayan was naturally aggrieved at the failure of his attempt to be friends with the King of Assam. On the other hand the conflict between the two Koch Kings did not abate. The frequent invasion of Koch territory by Parikhsit posed a danger to the Koch King. Besides this, the formation of the diplomatic alliance between the Kings of Assam and Kamrup caused much anxiety to him. At this critical juncture he was forced to seek the help of the Mughals. It is

²³Gait, E.A., Op.cit., p.110.

also a lesson of history that due to internal weakness a country falls an easy prey to foreign powers.

Lakhsminarayan accepted the Imperial vassalage in 1609. It was significant in the annals of Mughal north east frontier policy. It symbolised the process which had began with the political subjection of Koch Behar in the winter of 1596. 'A new vista of aggressive imperialism, formerly undreamt of, now opened'.²⁴

M.I. Bora, on the authority of Baharistan expresses the view that Lakhsminarayan paid his homage to Islam Khan, the Mughal viceroy at Ghoraghat and not at Dacca as narrated by Gait, through Raja Raghunath of Susang in 1608.²⁵ The year 1609 witnessed the eclipse of the independence of Koch Behar. It is mentioned in the Kamrupar Buranji that Lakshmi went in person to Mughal court and submitted to Emperor Shah Jahan. The reigning Emperor at that time was Jahangir (1605 - 1627 A.D.). The Koches had already established their diplomatic ties with the Mughals and as such there was no reason for the Koch King to go to Delhi at a time when his state was in danger of invasion. It might not also be practicable for Lakshmi to go to distant Dacca as his absence might be taken advantage of by the enemy.

²⁴Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., p.126.

²⁵Borah, M.I., Baharistan-i-Ghaybi of Mirza Nather (trans) vol.II, p.807 (foot notes).

In view of these circumstances, the views of M.I. Borah in this regard seem opposite. The Mughals received encouragement from the King of Koch Behar to conquer Kamrup in order to take revenge upon his enemy. Nevertheless, the Koch campaign was due more to Parikhsit's refusal to accept imperial vassalage than the request of Lakhminarayan.²⁶

Another factor responsible for the invasion of Kamrup was that Raja Raghunath of Susang was badly treated by Parikhsit and members of his family were imprisoned by him. Raghunath was a protege of the Mughals and hence, he too, was anxious for the invasion of Kamrup. He played a vital role in convincing the Mughal Subadar to invade Kamrup at the request of Lakhminarayan. Later the family of Raghunath was released by the Mughals after their victory against Parikhsit.²⁷

The real aim of the Mughals in adopting a strong forward policy towards Kamrup has been summed up by A.C. Roy - "This rich and flourishing Kingdom of Kamrup taming with elephants and aromatic plants must be wiped off and made a part and parcel of the Empire."²⁸ He

²⁶Borah, M.I., Op.cit., p.807.

²⁷Ibid., (taken from Padishahnama, 11).

²⁸Roy, A.C., Op.cit., p.152 (Reproduced from S.N. Bhattacharya's Mughal North East Frontier Policy).

further says that the Bengal government sent a punitive expedition under Abdul Wahid to Kamrup but could not produce any satisfactory results. K.L. Barua observes that Abdul Wahid was defeated easily by Parikhsit and the former fled to Fathpur.²⁹ According to S. N. Bhattacharya,

'the real origin of the conflicts leading to the intervention in Kamrup is to be found in a three fold combination of causes, operating in varying fortunes. Dynastic jealousy and enmity had certainly its influence, but it was intensified by the secret and selfish machination of Lakshmi against the territorial integrity of parikhsit's domain. The aggressive imperialistic tendency was undoubtedly the most dominant factor in the whole issue'.³⁰

In 1612 Islam Khan despatched a strong force under the command of Mukarram Khan and Sheikh Kamal to invade Koch Hajo. The force consisted of 6000 horses, 300 elephants, 10,000 to 12,000 infantry and about 500 warboats.³¹ A large number of Imperial officers, some vassal zamindars including Raja Raghunath as guide and Afgan mansabdars of Bayizid joined the expedition.³² In December, 1612, the Imperial army advanced by way of Phawal and Tok till they reached Salkona, on the left bank of

²⁹ Barua, K.L., J.A.R.S., Vol. III, pp.64-70, - 'Mirza Nathan's narrative'.

³⁰ Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., p.136.

³¹ Gait, E.A., Op.cit., p.66. Blochmann, J.A.S.B., 1872, pp.53-62.

³² Sarkar, Sir J.N., History of Bengal, p.285.

the Prahmaputra, midway between Patladah and Hatisila.³³
 A fierce naval battle took place in which Parikhsit's
 fleet of 300 boats was annihilated.³⁴

Before the battle broke out, realising his helpless position, Parikhsit made a frantic attempt to strengthen himself with the help of the Ahoms. He sent envoys to the Ahom monarch to report that unless the Invasion was resisted at the initial stage, the consequence would be very disastrous both for Assam and Kamrup. The Ahom monarch welcomed this gesture and in reply requested Parikhsit to see him personally.³⁵ Unfortunately, Parikhsit had no time to visit the Ahom court as Mughal invasion was imminent. He also failed to estimate the strength of the enemy as he was feeling proud of his recent victory over them commanded by Abdul Wahid. Had there been a joint defence as planned by Parikhsit, the results of the Mughal invasion would have been different. The Ahom-Mughal conflict which followed immediately after subjugation of Kamrup was the indirect result of the short-sighted policy of Pratap Singha. Nearly three years had passed after the invasion of Abdul Wahid till the expedition of Mukarram Khan and during this period

³³Roy, A.C., Op.cit., p.152.

³⁴Gait, E.A., Op.cit., p.66. Sarkar, Sir T.N., Op.cit., p.285.

³⁵Wade, J.F., An Account of Assam (ed.) Benudhar Sharma, p.232.

the Kamrup King could have mobilised all his resources and convinced the Ahom monarch for a joint defence. At a subsequent stage the latter rendered some help to Koch prince Bali Narayan but could produce no effective results. Nevertheless, by seeking help from Assam Parikhsit displayed his wisdom and foresight.

According to Gait, the Ahoms consented to the request of Parikhsit for help on condition that the latter sent all available forces to join the Ahom army. But Parikhsit was unwilling to do so.³⁶ S.N.Bhattacharya on the other hand says that the Ahom King gave an evasive and vague reply which was tantamount to refusal. The Ahom King further reported to have advised his counterpart to vacate his kingdom and then join the former for an united defence.³⁷ Apparently it was unbearable for the Koch king to vacate his kingdom. It can therefore, be seen that Paratap Singha paid half-hearted attention to this serious problem and persisted in his impolitic attitude. The idea of creating Kamrup as a buffer state had been frustrated.

The Imperial army in the meantime was re-inforced at Salkona and the expedition proceeded northwards very cautiously along the bank of the Brahmaputra and reached

³⁶ Gait, E.A., Op.cit., p.66.

³⁷ Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., pp.134-135.

the vicinity of Dhubri. There, they garrisoned 500 cavalry and 1000 infantry. The Imperialists under the command of Mirza Nathan conquered the newly acquired territories of Farikhsit, viz., Bahirbond and Bhitarbond covering the entire right bank of the Brahmaputra.³⁸ Gradually they advanced as far as to Dhubri, supported by the forces of Raja Satrajit and Lakshminarayan. The siege of Dhubri fort followed which continued for three and half months. Finally it fell in April, 1613 A.D. Farikhsit was forced to retire to his capital Gilah on the Gadadhar river.³⁹

Both sides now wanted peace. Farikhsit sent an envoy to the Bengal viceroy to negotiate the terms of the treaty. The Koch king agreed to pay a huge sum as indemnity.⁴⁰ The Imperialists wanted that Farikhsit should visit Dacca personally and give his consent to cede a portion of his territory. This demand was rejected by the Kamrup King.⁴¹

Hostilities, therefore, were renewed. The Mughals under the command of Bahadur Ghazi and Sona Ghazi marched

³⁸ Sarkar, Sir J.N., History of Bengal, p.285.

³⁹ Ibid.,

⁴⁰ Poy, A.C., Op.cit., p.152.

⁴¹ Gait, Op.cit., p.66. Sarkar, Sir J.N., Op.cit., p.286.

to Gilah. The Koch forces, under the command of Dimarua Raja, son-in-law of Parikhsit with his 700 war boats and 50 elephants met the enemies on the bank of the Gadadhar river. The son-in-law of Parikhsit was not Dimaria by name as stated by Gait, but the chief of the state of Dinarua.⁴² The name of the admiral of this Kamrup fleet, as mentioned in some Buranjis, is Purandar Laskar. Apparently this Dinarua Chief was no other than Purandar Laskar of the Koch fleet. He performed his duties pretty well and captured 250 war boats inflicting heavy losses on the enemies. Bahadur Ghazi and Sona Ghazi escaped Kuber Khan, the commander of the Imperial fleet fell fighting. The victors then moved down to Phubri with a huge force of 20 elephants, 500 cavalry and 10,000 infantry.⁴³ A division of Afgan and Rajput forces led by Jamal Khan Mankali and Lachmi Rajput was easily defeated. The commanders also received wounds.⁴⁴

Then the army of Parikhsit under the command of Fateh Khan advanced to another fort guarded by the Afgan archers of Usman, the Pathan hero and now a commander of the Imperial forces.⁴⁵ Nitai, a commander of the Koch

⁴²Sarkar, Sir. J.N., Op.cit., p.286.

⁴³Gait, Op.cit., p.66.

⁴⁴Sarkar, Sir. J.N., Op.cit., p.287.

⁴⁵Bhuyan, S.K., Padishah Buranji (ed.), p.189.

army fled away followed by his soldiers. Parikhsit rallied the rest of his forces and a terrible battle ensued. Fateh Khan was captured and Paramananda Poloi, another officer of the Koch army died fighting.⁴⁶ But the battle dragged on all the day without any decisive results.

Meanwhile, the fleet of the Zamindars of Bengal, alarmed at the disastrous defeat on the previous night failed to stand any longer and they were about to be overpowered. At this critical moment, a cannon ball struck the Dimarua Faja at his breast. He succumbed to his injuries and this incident completely demoralised the Kamrup navy and so it hastily withdrew.⁴⁷ Parikhsit then decided to retreat to his former position after midnight leaving behind all his war elephants and the whole army following him in utter confusion.⁴⁸

Once again fate favoured the Mughals. They chased the Kamrup King to Gilah. But no sooner the Imperialist reached Gilah than Parikhsit evacuated that place and proceeded as far as to Barnagar on the Manas. The victor occupied Gilah and seized immense booty.

⁴⁶Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit.,

⁴⁷sarkar, sir J.N., Op.cit., p.287.

⁴⁸Ibid.

Supported by Lakshminarayan, the Mughals continued their relentless pursuit of Parikhsit for six days. A fleet under Mirza Qasim Khazanchi and Raja Pratapjit also moved eastward along the Brahmaputra to intercept Parikhsit's passage on the Manas.⁴⁹

Worn out in body and mind, the Kamrup King at last escaped to Pandu. He was hotly chased and forced to surrender in July 1613. Kamrup, thus lost its separate existence and was annexed to the Mughal Empire.⁵⁰ The annexation of Kamrup by the Mughals produced far reaching results. Pratap Singha's idea of creating Kamrup as a buffer state had been completely frustrated. The Mughals now became the deadly neighbours of the Ahoms. Gradually, Assam plunged into a long period of armed conflict with the Mughals.

According to S.N. Bhattacharya,

"the conquest of Kamrup would not have been much delayed even if the Neo-Koch Ahom alliance had remained in tact. The mighty wave of imperialistic aggression which had swept over Koch Behar was sure to deluge Kamrup next and would then have flooded its immediate neighbour, Assam."⁵¹

It might have been difficult indeed to check the wave of

⁴⁹Sarkar, Sir J.N., Op.cit.,

⁵⁰Ibid.,

⁵¹Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., p.150.

aggressive imperialism of the Mughals because concerted efforts at resistance were lacking. The Ahom monarch did not give any assistance to the Kamrup King in time.

After the conquest of Kamrup, Parikhsit, as advised by his officers offered to pay to the Padshah an annual tribute of two maunds of agar wood, 500 thungas, 100 elephants, 200 tungan ghoras (horses) and 400 yak tails as a price for the return of his kingdom. The Mughal commander Mukaram Khan rejected this offer. He however, asked Parikhsit to submit in person for which full security was assured. Then accompanied by ministers and nobles, Parikhsit offered his submission to Mukharam Khan. The latter received him with great honour and presented clothes and ornaments. Later the Kamrup King was sent to the Padshah.⁵²

According to local Buranjis both Lakshmi and Parikhsit were sent to the Imperial court. Emperor Jahangir received them cordially and tried to reconcile the conflicts between the two kings. Apparently, the Emperor wanted to restore peace in the north-east frontier of his empire through a permanent settlement in the

⁵²Bhuyan, S.K., Padshah Buranji, p.190.

affairs of Kamrup and Koch Behar. Accordingly Jahangir advised Parikhsit to bow down to Lakshminarayan but he refused. Parikhsit was therefore, detained for sometime.⁵³ Lakshminarayan was allowed to return to Koch Behar as a vassal ruler as before. He was also presented with horses and swords as a token of love. 'But inspite of his fidelity to the Emperor, the Viceroy of Bengal put him into detention till 1617, contrary to all cannons of diplomacy and morality. During this period his son Virnarayan ruled the country as a vassal'.⁵⁴

After sometime Parikhsit was allowed to return in consideration of a promise of seven lakhs of rupees and the admission of his four sons and daughters into the Imperial Court as hostages for the release of their father.⁵⁵ Parikhsit also promised not to create any trouble among his Kinsmen and brought a portrait of Jahangir as a mark of respect. It is however, doubtful whether he ever could pay the sum of Rupees seven lakhs as promised in view of the fact that his country had been devastated by protracted wars. On the other hand, if he was sincere in his promise to pay the amount, he

⁵³Borah, M.I., Baharistan-i-Ghaybi, p.836.
 Bhuyan, S.K., Padshah Buranji, p.191.

⁵⁴Borah, M.I., Op.cit., 137. Bhattacharya, S.M., Op.cit., p.147.

⁵⁵Sharma, Benudhar, 'Dakhinkol', Souvenir of the Assam Sahitya Sabha, 1882 Saka - 'Palasbarir Ditiye Pasare'.

would not have committed suicide at Tribeni (Allahabad) on his way back home. The fact remains that Kamrup was already annexed by the Mughals and that neither Farikhsit nor his sons could fulfil the promises. It seems probable that the failure to pay the stipulated amount by Farikhsit led to the viceroy's refusal to restore him to power.⁵⁶

In regard to the death of Farikhsit at Tribeni, certain views were expressed in the Padshah Buranji.⁵⁷ Farikhsit was guided by the belief that 'one who dies in Tribeni (the confluence of the three rivers, viz., Ganga, Jamuna and Saraswati) commits no sins and rather he attains whatever desire a man cherishes before death'. Thus he renounced his body in the holy water of Tribeni. Another factor responsible for his suicide might be that, Islam Khan, the Viceroy received many complaints from some officers of Kamrup against Farikhsit for his alleged atrocities upon them while he was the King of Kamrup. Apparently these officers did not welcome the release of Farikhsit. These complaints were brought to the notice of the Koch King : This might have wounded his vanity. He died broken hearted in infamy and obscurity some time after the spring of 1618.⁵⁸ "He was utterly unfit to guide the ship of the state through the stormy waters ahead. He lacked the prudence of his father."⁵⁹

⁵⁶Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., p.147.

⁵⁷Bhuyan, S.K., Padshah Buranji, p.192.

⁵⁸Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., p.147.

⁵⁹Ibid.

While Parikhsit was taken prisoner to Delhi, his brother Balinarayan, defeated by the Mughals fled to Assam seeking help from the Ahom monarch. Kamrup was thus annexed to the Mughal Empire. The military affairs of this territory were first conducted under the supervision of the fouzdar of Rangamati. Sayid Abu Bakr, brother of Mukarram Khan was left in command of the Mughal garrison which was first stationed at Khelah. On the death of Abu Bakr at the first Ahom-Mughal armed conflict (1616 A.D.), Mukarram Khan was appointed fouzdar. He transferred the headquarters from Rangamati to Hajo.⁶⁰

Some Koch officers of Kamrup accompanied their king to Delhi. They were Kabindra Patra's son, Kabi Sekhar, Sriram Laskar and others. After the annexation of Kamrup these officers received some assignments with the titles of Choudhury, Katak, Patwary, Laskar etc..⁶¹ Kabisekhar was appointed Kanangoe at Hajo. Likewise several Mohammedan officers were given estates in Kamrup. Many Muslim soldiers also were settled in Kamrup and provided with land.⁶² A Mughal fleet was stationed at Pandu to maintain the line of communication with Bengal

⁶⁰Gait, Op.cit., p.67. Blochmann, J.A.R.S., 1872, Part-I.

⁶¹Bhuyan, S.K., Pādshah Buranji (ed.), p.193.

⁶²Gait, Op.cit., pp.67-68.

as well as to put down internal rebellion in Harapp.⁶³

Thus the period from 1609 to 1613 A.D. witnessed the first phase of Mughal imperialism in the north-east frontier beyond Bengal leading to the annexation of two Koch Kingdoms. It was the mutual rivalry between the two which helped the invaders to acquire territory.

⁶³Gait, Op.cit., p.155.

C H A P T E R - I I I

THE AHOM-MUGHAL RIVALRY

The Mughal conquest of Kamrup in 1613 A.D. marks the beginning of a new chapter in the history of north-east frontier of Mughal India. The boundary of the empire was thus pushed up eastward to Pandu and the river Barnadi and Koch Kamrup now became a part of Bengal Suba. With a view to maintaining the security of the frontier region, Satrajit, a vanquished Raja of Bengal and now in the services of the empire was appointed the thanadar of Pandu as a reward for his services in the recent Mughal Koch War.¹

Ever since the advent of the Mughals in Kamrup, tension had been simmering in the western frontier of Assam and it seemed almost certain that Assam would face the brunt of Mughals' military power soon. The close proximity of the two powerful neighbours was bound to create serious problems. Within a short time a sort of hostile relationship grew up between the two powers. But this hostility was not the result of Mughal's friendship with Koch Behar or the enmity of the Ahoms with this Koch Kingdom as stated by S.N. Bhattacharya.² However, the intimate relations formed

¹Gait, E.A., History of Assam, (reprint, 1967), p.110.

²Bhattacharya, S.N., Mughals' North-East Frontier Policy, p.149.

with their political rivals tended to create inimical feeling between the Ahoms and the Mughals. Their subsequent actions proved beyond doubt that both of them fought for the establishment of their predominance in the north-east frontier of India.

The first task before the Mughals was to consolidate their authority in Kamrup. It was really a formidable task in the face of armed revolts of the Koch Chiefs who refused to submit. For more than two years after the expulsion of Parikhsit, the Mughals were fully occupied with consolidating their authority over the region west of the river Manas. Although they were de-jure rulers of this entire tract, effective control of the Mughals during the early years did not extend much beyond Jahangirbad and Rangamati because of their incessant hostility with the rebels of Khontaghat region.³ The scene of activity gradually, shifted to the territories east of the Manas.

Prince Palinarayan, brother of Parikhsit - narayan and many Koch Chiefs who had fought earlier against the Mughals soon rose into revolt. They were scared not crushed. The prominent among them were, Sanatan of Damdama (Hajo), Samudra (Samuroid) Kayeth

³Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., p.175.

of Rangjuli, Rabha Chief Parsuram of Solmari, Mamu Gobind of Beltola. After the conquest of Kamrup they fled to different parts of the Kingdom and tried to establish there with their followers. However to lack of united efforts among them they fought in vain.

The first Koch leader to resist Mughal imperialism in Kamrup was Sanatan of Dandama. When Abu Bakr advanced upto the Brahmaputra eastward Sanatan opposed him.⁴ But the Mughals easily defeated him. He could however, defend his fort for a long time. Most of the Koch Chiefs were highly aggrieved at the confinement of their King at Delhi Court. Some of them later gave up their resistance after the release of the Koch King. However, the news of his death was too much to bear for them. Sanatan did not give up struggle even after the death of his master as stated by K.L. Barua.⁵ Subsequent to the death of Parikhsit Sanatan inflicted several defeats on the Mughal forces near Hajo.⁶ There had been more sporadic Koch insurrections in the neighbourhood of Hajo. Abdul Baqi, the Mughal fouzdar of Barnagar along with Mirza Sahin tried hard to put down these rebellions. The Mughals captured a Koch fort at Kewarhada hill on the bank of the Brahmaputra.⁷ At one stage the Koches

⁴Barua, K.L., J.A.R.S. Vol. III, A Koch Hero of the 17th Century.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Gait, Op.cit., p.68.

⁷Ibid.

were chased as far as to Jootia by the Mughals under the command of Dhar Munkut, a Hindu officer.⁸ Balinarayan also revolted in the easternmost part of Kamrup.

Shortly after the annexation of Kamrup, Islam Khan, the Subadar of Bengal passed away (August, 1613). With his death the Mughals lost a dynamic personality. He dominated the scene waging wars unrelentingly against the local zamindars reducing them to submission. He may rightly be regarded as one of the makers of Mughal empire and the greatest viceroy of the Bengal Suba.⁹

After his defeat at the hands of the Mughals, Balinarayan in his utter distress fled to Assam for shelter. The Mughal occupation of Kamrup was a nightmare to him. In vain he put resistance so long against the invaders. He now realised that without the help of the Ahoms it would be difficult to fight back the Mughals, with a view to securing help, he exchanged his ideas with the Ahom King through a special messenger, Shalluna Wakeel.¹⁰ The messenger handed over a personal letter from Balinarayan addressed to Swargadeo Susengpha alias Pratap Singha narrating the circumstances that led to his flight from his homeland.

⁸Barua, K.L., Op.cit., p.96.

⁹Sarkar, Sir J.N., History of Bengal, p.286.

¹⁰Wade, J.P., An Account of Assam (ed.) Manuchar Sharma, p.237.

Being a relation to the Koch King, the Sargamao was apparently aggrieved to see the plight of the Koches. The defeat of Parikhsit and his confinement also shocked him much. He was equally alarmed at the rapid advance of the Mughals towards the east. He thus made a common cause with the Koch prince and accordingly sent Marinath, a Ahom Katakai asking Balinarayan to see him personally at Gargaon.¹¹ Soon after he was cordially received at the Ahom Court. They discussed the strategy to expel the Bangals from Kamrup (Feb. 1615).¹² The Koch prince was later installed as the tributary Raja of Darrang after the Ahom victory over the Mughals (1616).

One of the reasons as to why Pratap Singha desired to support Balinarayan might be that he wanted to check the further advance of the Mughals by erecting Darrang as a buffer state between the two powerful kingdoms. He had already committed a blunder by not helping the Koch King of Kamrup (Parikhsit) when the latter sought his help. Pratap Singha realised that Balinarayan and the hill Chiefs of the western region would serve as an effective check against the Mohammedans. So he sought their cooperation against their common enemy. But unfortunately neither his plan succeeded

¹¹Wade, J.P., Op.cit.

¹²Phuyan, S.K., Kamrupar Buranji (ed.), p.19.

nor Balinarayan could consolidate his authority in view of prolonged war.

Besides this, there had been a number of causes that led to the Ahom-Mughal wars. The bitter rivalry and jealousy of the Imperial officers made stable government in Kamrup very difficult. The revolt of Sheikh Ibrahim, the Krori (revenue officer) of Kamrup weakened the edifice of the Mughals. In fact the Mughals remained in Kamrup like an army of occupation.¹³ Many of them were not loyal to their masters. The efficiency of the Mughal administration deteriorated much after the death of Islam Khan, the viceroy as it all depended upon his personality to set it right. Two Mughal officers, Santosh Laskar and Jairam Laskar fled to the Ahom Kingdom only to escape punishment at the hands of the viceroy. They failed to supply elephants to the government.¹⁴ They wanted to take vengeance upon their masters. One of the major tasks of the Bengal government immediately after the occupation of Kamrup was to catch elephants for the imperial force. About 10,000 to 12,000 paiks were sent to Kamrup where they were given jaigirs by the government for keeping up Kheda operations (enclosures for catching wild elephants).

¹³Poy, A.C., History of Bengal, p.156.

¹⁴Blochmann, J.A.S.B., 1872, Part I.

As most of the paiks failed to supply the required number of elephants, they faced punishment at the hands of the Subadar. Subsequently they sought retribution by passing over to the side of the Assam King.¹⁵ The Ahom King liberally gave them shelter and, gradually, he was encouraged by these hostile elements to support their causes. The hill-chieftains of Dakhinkol, in course of their frequent conflicts, with the Mughals, also prayed for help from the Assam King. Apparently the Assam King became an enemy of the Mughals.

The most important factor responsible for the first Mughal invasion was the political ambition of the Viceroy Qasim Khan to carry out his brothers forward policy in the north-east, a step further by the conquest of Assam.¹⁶ 'An unholy desire for political supremacy and territorial expansion appear to have been the guiding motive of the Mughals.'¹⁷ Though the political issue was predominant, it was complicated by boundary and trade disputes. The Mughal traders penetrated into the Assam territory although there had been protests from Assam from the beginning of their

¹⁵Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., p.246.

¹⁶Sarkar, Sir J.N., History of Bengal, Muslim Period, p.295.

¹⁷Roy, A.C., Op.cit., p.159.

stay in Kamrup, their activities were very much provocative. Further, the rich natural resources of Assam, viz., ivory tusk, aloe wood, silk etc., encouraged the illegal trade which embittered feelings on both sides and precipitated the crisis.

The situation was further aggravated by the presence of a dismissed Ahom officer, Akhek Gohain in the Mughal camp. This officer along with his brother, Kera Gohain escaped to Mughal camp and encouraged them to invade Assam. He happened to be one of the leaders of the first Mughal expedition to Assam.

It is however, doubtful if Emperor Jahangir could adopt a strong aggressive policy in the north-east in view of the fact that the first part of his reign was marked by indiscipline and dissension in the Imperial camp in Bengal. In the later part of his reign, the efficiency of the administration had gone down due to the influence of his queen, Nurjahan. Stanely Lane-poole tells us that Emperor Jahangir had been addicted to intoxicating liquor very heavily from the age of 18. "The Emperor used to drink as much as 20 cups a day, at first of wine, then of double-distilled liquor of such potency that it made Sir Thomas

Roc, the British ambassador, sneeze, to the delight of the whole court."¹⁸ This being the state of the realm, the empire was practically ruled by the queen with the aid of her brother, Asaf Khan. During this period the Mughals lost their old military spirit and control of the central Government over the provinces were not what it should have been. Everything became rotten.

It, therefore, turned out that the military operations in Assam constituted a part of the foreign policy of the Bengal Government. The officers served under the general supervision of the Viceroy but they were really responsible to the Emperor.¹⁹ Hence many Imperial officers engaged in the expedition were found to be not sincere and loyal to the Viceroy. They also found it extremely hazardous to pass through the jungles of Assam. This resulted in the emergence of intrigues and dissensions in the Mughal camp in Namrup.

A number of Mohammedan traders were once found collecting agar wood for the imperial store in an unauthorised manner. Early in 1615 A.D., one Ratancha, a Mughal trader, suspected to be a spy was captured

¹⁸ Lanepoole, Stanely, The Heritage of Akbar, pp.12-13.

¹⁹ Querreshi, J.H., The Administration of the Mughal Empire, p.231.

by the Ahom officers, Habung Chetia and Chandohara while purchasing agar wood at Singari hill. Two of the associates of Ratancha were killed at the same time and their boats were seized. Ratancha fled away. Swargudeo Pratap Singha became indignant with the Mughal traders and ordered his officers to capture the traders if found within his territory.²⁰ To deal effectively with the foreigners, the Ahom monarch took steps to strengthen the espionage system. The gradual infiltration of the 'Bangals' in the guise of commercial intercourse and their rapacious activities were viewed with alarm by the Assamese. All these brought to the surface mutual recrimination resulting in serious armed clashes.

The incident of the killing of the Mughal traders in the early part of 1615 A.D. was only a pretext to launch an attack on Assam. The Viceroy had so long been preparing for invasion of Assam. He immediately despatched a powerful army to organise retaliatory measures against the Ahoms.²¹ The Mughal force included most of the vanquished chiefs of eastern Bengal with their war materials and some Rajput leaders. The expedition started at the end of the rainy season in 1615 A.D. under the command of Sayid Hakim and

²⁰Bhuyan, S.K., Kamrupar Puranjali (ed.), p.20.

²¹Bhuyan, S.K., Atan Buragohain and his times, p.8.

Sayid Abu Bakr, a Zamindar of Kishar with ten thousand horses and infantry and four hundred large war boats. Satrajit, the thanadar of Pandu later joined the Mughal force and remained in charge of the expedition. The Ahom army first moved to Kohatta, the frontier village of Kamrup on the mouth of the river Barnadi and halted there for reinforcement.²² The enemy reached Kaliabar (Sala) by way of the Kalong and then a column of the force crossed the Brahmaputra to the south of river Bharali on the north bank.²³ The invaders won the first battle at Kaliabar as the Ahoms were not prepared to meet them there. This victory was followed by another victory on the bank of the river Bharali near Sandhara. The Mughals seized the materials of the royal stores at Kaliabar and also took away two dancing girls from the temple of Dergaon (Nov. 1615).²⁴ Some Ahom officers were either killed or captured. Pratap Singha who was camping at Agiabandha, failed to defend and retreated.²⁵ The Mughals followed up their victory by a series of plundering raids into the interior. It is unfortunate that two Ahom nobles, Akhek Gohain and Kera Gohain who were fugitives in the Mughal camp

²²Mazumdar, R.C., The Mughal Empire, Vol.VII, p.164. (Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan).

²³Gait, Op.cit., p.110.

²⁴Barua, Harakanta, Asom Buranji, p.38.; Barua, G.R., Asom Buranji, p.79.; Bhuyan, S.K., Kamrupar Buranji (ed.) p.20.

²⁵Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.21.

informed the Mughal Commander that the Ahoms had two Chowkis in the frontier, one at Khaqarijan on the bank of the Kalang and the other at Sandhara on the bank of the Bharali. Evidently the invaders could easily defeat the Ahoms with the help of these two Assamese officers.

Pratap Singha was overwhelmed with grief at his recent defeat and asked his nobles to prepare for a counter attack on the Mughals who were taking rest near Sandhara. They constructed a fort at Pikhomukh and gradually advanced towards Sandhara, New Bridges were constructed over the river Bharali. Chengdhar Neog was appointed the commander of the expedition. Lacham Sandikoi, Pikchai Chetia and others advanced by boats. The Ahom force consisted of 3,00,000 Infantry and 700 war elephants.²⁶ Akhek Gohain in the meantime deserted the Mughals receiving a promise of pardon from the Ahom King. Gohain's return to the Ahom camp gave an opportunity to the Ahoms to get valuable information about the war strategy of the Mughals. At this stage, the Buragohain, the Bargohain and other high officials asked the Deodhais to examine the legs of fowls.²⁷ The Deodhais after examining it asked

²⁶ Sarkar, Sir J.N., Op.cit., p.297.

²⁷ Bhuyan, S.K., Deodhai Asom Buranji, p.60.

them to strike in the night.²⁸ Thus as advised, the Ahoms surprised the Mughals in a night attack (January 1616). The Mughals who were unprepared to face the enemy in the night were easily overpowered. Their camp at Sandhara was stormed, arsenals destroyed and elephants seized. A large number of officers including Sayid Hakim, Jamal Khan Mankali, Bhagaban Buxi, Gokul Chand, Lachmi Rajput, Abu Bakr and his son were slain. The deadbody of Giyasuddin was brought to Fajo as he was considered to be a pious man and buried there.²⁹

The imperial fleet, mainly consisting of the war boats of the zamindars, at first resisted. But the news of the fall of Abu Bakr, the Commander and the seizure of their fort so much unnerved them that they gave up further resistance and fell an easy prey to the enemy. Almost the whole fleet was seized some naval officers viz., Miran Sayid Masud, in-charge of the Zamindari war boats, Sona Ghazi and Raja Satrajit escaped while Ilahdad Khan Dakhini, Raja Rai, Narsing Rai, Karamchand, son of Satrajit and many others

²⁸Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.60.; Parua, Golap Chandra, Ahom Buranji, p.99.

²⁹Gait, J.A.S.B. - Vol. LXIII, Part I, 1873 - 'The Koch Kings of Kamrupa'.; Sarkar, Sir J.N., History of Bengal, (Muslim Period), p.297.; Bhuyan, S.K. Kamrupar Buranji (ed.), p.22.

were captured.³⁰ According to Baharistan-i-Shaykh, 5000 Mohammedans were killed, 9,000 were captured and 3,000 fled from the field. Satrajit's son was later sacrificed at the altar of the Goddess Kamakhya. On the Ahom side, Srifal Bora, Namal Pora, Hati Barua, Lachan Sandikai and Chiringdung were killed.

Having heard the news of the victory, Pratap Singh immediately ordered not to kill the captive officers as he was anxious to see them in person. He dashed to Sandhara but no sooner did he reach the place than most of the captured officers were slain. At this, the Swargadeo expressed his great anguish and ordered that Choulai Konwar, his elder brother and other officers responsible for the killing of the Mughal captive officers be put to death. He then returned to the capital in triumph and performed the Pikkhvan ceremony.³¹

Soon after the Ahoms established their camp under the charge of Habung Pikchai at Kajalimukh (Jany. 1616 A.D.). The promise of pardon granted to Akhek Gohain was later revoked by the King as he was treated as traitor to the motherland. Akhek and his daughter

³⁰Sarkar, Sir J.N., Op.cit., 297.

³¹Gait, A History of Assam, p.111.; Barua G.C., Op.cit., p.99.

Mohanpuria were subsequently put to death.³²

Thus the first expedition of Qasim Khan on Assam ended in a disaster. The loss in men and materials was heavy but heavier still was the moral breakdown, the loss in military prestige and political power. On the other hand, the victory enhanced the self-confidence of Pratap Singha. He succeeded in stemming the tide of Mughal victory temporarily.

The Ahom King felt the imperative need of strengthening the administration now. This was necessiated due to growing problems arising out of the conflict with the Mughals. Dissensions and intrigues among the officers had already gripped the country. Although the government was centralised, the nobility acted in a manner which brought about suspicions and jealousies against each other. The position being such, no officer could be relied on. The necessity to remodel the war strategy and diplomacy was also seriously considered by the King. He introduced a class of new petty officers, called the 'Sajati' to ensure receiving correct information about the affairs of the state including the conduct of the officers. These

³²Barua, G.C., Op.cit., p.99.; Bhuyan, S.K., Deochai Asom Buranji, p.62.; Gait, Op.cit., p.109.

officers (Sajati) remained under the direct control of the King and had served as secret informers, advisers and messengers to their master. With a view to streamlining the diplomatic corps he replaced the Ahom Katakis with Brahmin Katakis as the latter were gifted with speaking faculties and intelligence. Pratap Singha once explained to the Katakis the importance of their duties thus : "I am highly pleased with the manner in which you have conducted yourselves and asserted your views in a foreign country. Katakis should be shieldmen. Your words alone constitute your rice."³³

The merit of the improved espionage system could be seen when Akhek Gohain was won over by the Ahom spies and deserted the enemy camp through a promise of pardon. It was considered to be dangerous that an Ahom officer should be helping the enemy in the wars. At the second stage of the first Ahom-Mughal war at Samdhara, Akhek gave important information to the Ahoms which partly contributed to their victory. Satrajit, the Mughal thanadar of Pandu was also influenced by

³³Devi, L., Ahom-Tribal Relations, pp.261,262.

the Ahom officials at a later stage. But contrary to expectation, Satrajit did more harm than good to the Ahoms by frustrating all attempts for restoration of friendly relations between the two powers.

Prince Balinarayan who had earlier decided to fight along with the Ahoms against the Mughals remained aloof in the recent war. It may be due to the fact that he did not get much time to organise his force. However, after Ahom victory he was installed as a tributary king under a new name Dharma Narayan, in the newly created state of Darrang. This new state comprised the western portion of Assam on both sides of the Brahmaputra and his capital was established at a place on the south bank of the Brahmaputra,³⁴ probably near present Guwahati. The Ahom king conferred the title 'Dharma Narayan' in allusion to the propriety of his conduct and conversation on the occasion.³⁵ He was also empowered to collect revenue from the 18 hill Rajas on a tributary basis.³⁶ Unfortunately, he could not consolidate his power in view of protracted wars with the Mughals. The

³⁴Gait, A History of Assam, p.111.

³⁵Wade, J.P., (ed.) Benudhar Sharma, An Account of Assam, p.238.

³⁶Bharmā, Benudhar, 'Dakhinkol', Souvenir of the Assam Sahitya Sabha, Saka, 1882, 'Palasbarin' diye Kasare'.

history of Mughal Kamrup subsequent to the year 1616 which lasted till 1635 is one long tale of persistent attempts made by Dharma Narayan to subvert the Imperial authority, sometimes by open attack and sometimes by secret help offered to the hill Rajas of Dakhinkol. Throughout his life he struggle hard to yoke off his ancestral domain from foreign domination. 'Like the great Rajput hero Rana Pratap Singh of Chitor, he refused to bow down to the Mughals and held his head high as long as he lived.'³⁷

The most important single factor responsible for the outbreak of the Ahom-Mughal armed conflict was the imperialistic venture of The Bengal Viceroy, Qasim Khan. Due to his impolitic designs, however, the first expedition ended in a disaster. The failure of the expedition led to the dismissal of Qasim Khan from office. He was succeeded by Ibrahim Khan Fath Jang. The victory of the Ahoms against the Mughals gave the former an opportunity to remodel their traditional war strategy. They now launched a counter attack on the Mughals in Kamrup.

³⁷Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., p.181.

C H A P T E R - I V

WAR IN KAMRUP

The defeat of the mighty Mughals at the battle of Sandhara (Jany. 1616 A.D.) was an event of far reaching importance. Both panic and despair seized the Mughal forces. The loss of most of their commanders completely demoralised them. They were further threatened with fresh attack by the Assamese and the very foundation of empire was shaken. The Mughals now realised that the invasion was untimely and impolitic. The Imperial authority at Delhi was shocked to death over this disaster and held the Bengal Viceroy responsible for this. Within a short time a new viceroy was appointed to replace Qasim Khan. The Mughals also were compelled to give up their policy of aggressive imperialism and soberly settled down to a policy of peace, conciliation and consolidation in their new sphere of activity.¹

Meanwhile the Assamese forces chased the remnant of the Mughal troops as far as Fandu. They also stormed the Imperial fortified camp at Agiathuti. Abus-Salan,

¹Bhattacharya, S.N., Mughal North-East Frontier Policy, p.158.

²Gait, E.A., A History of Assam, p.112.

the Mughal Commander could not resist the enemy at Pandu for long. He retreated along with his fleet to Hajo. Satrajit, the thanadar of Pandu outpost also retreated to Hajo, their official headquarters. Gradually the Ahoms concentrated their troops heavily near Pandu. They also constructed one fort each at Pandu and Agiathuti on both sides of the Brahmaputra. Most of their high officials including the Buragohain and Bargohain were asked to stay there to strengthen their position.³ Constructions of two more forts, one at Samdhara and the other at Kaliabar had, in the meantime, been completed. The Ahoms now were fully prepared to launch a counter attack. Thus the scene of the conflict had been shifted to the Mughal territory.

Abus-Salam, in his utter distress, immediately, sent urgent message to the Viceroy of Bengal narrating the state of affairs in Kamrup. He also requested for heavy reinforcement in order to combat the fresh attack of the Assamese. Subadar Qasim Khan, on receipt of the report ordered Mirza Nathan, who was then staying at Barnagar to proceed to Hajo with his troops. Accordingly he left with a thousand horse, a thousand matchlockmen and two hundred war-boats.⁴ Soon after his arrival,

³Barua, G.C., Ahom Buranji, p.101.

⁴Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., p.181.

he started giving relief work to the panic stricken and wounded soldiers. His main task was, however, to boost up the morale of the soldiers. Simultaneously he was to prepare for clearing the Pandu fort from the enemy attacks.

Highly elated by the recent victories and also encouraged by Dharmanarayan, Pratap Singha prepared for a bigger attack. The 18 hill Rajas and the Dimaria Raja submitted to the Ahom King and promised all help so as to drive the Mohammedans out of the vicinity of Kamrup. The dimarua Raja was formerly a tributary to the Koch King of Kamrup. He took the first opportunity to support the cause of the Assam King. Apparently he was happy to hear the news of the Assamese victory followed by advance of their troops upto Pandu. The Dimaria Raja and the hill Rajas had no direct contact with the Mughals till then and they were seriously alarmed at the latter's advance eastward. The recent Ahom victory gave these frontier Rajas an encouragement to fight unitedly against the invaders. People from all walks of life also submitted to Pratap Singha and expressed their determination to expel the invaders.⁵

⁵Bhuyan, S.K., Kamrupar Buranji, p.24.

Mirza Nathan, the new Mughal Commander soon proceeded to Pandu to meet the challenges of the enemies. He faced the combined attacks of the Ahoms, the Dimaria Raja, Dharmanarayan and the hill Rajas. A series of clashes occurred near Pandu. With utmost valour the Mirza could defend the Pandu fort. At one stage he advanced southward and captured the fort of Panipat.⁶ At this stage serious internal troubles broke out in Kamrup. Sheikh Ibrahim Krori, the principal revenue officer, taking advantage of the weakness of the Bengal government and the disorderly state of affairs in Kamrup, misappropriated a sum of Rs.7 (seven) lakhs from the Imperial exchequer and with about 3000 followers rebelled in the vain hope of becoming independent. He went a step further by inducing the local Koch leaders to stir up against the Mughals. The Koch hero Sanatan accordingly proceeded to the thana of Dandama with his force to assist the rebel officer.⁷ Abdul Faqir, the Chief Officer of Hajo had in the meantime, left for Bengal. The incident necessitated the presence of Mirza Nathan at Hajo. As there was no strong officer to deal effectively with these internal revolts, the

⁶Borah, M.I., 'Baharistan-i-Ghaybi' of Mirza Nathan, p.423.

⁷Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., p.247.

Mirza was required to return immediately leaving the fort of Pandu at the mercy of the Assamese. Thus he assumed virtual control of the military affairs in Kamrup.

During the short period of about one year (1616-1617) after the Mughal disaster at Samdhara till the arrival of the new Subadar, Ibrahim Khan Fath Jang at Jahangirnagar (Dacca), significant changes took place in the administration of Kamrup. Besides external danger, the Mughals were confronted with serious internal disorder. Most of the favourite officers of Viceroy Qasim Khan were withdrawn. Abdul Baqi, a favourite officer of Qasim Khan left Hajo after the arrival of Mirza Nathan. He was later on made a captive in the hands of the men of the new viceroy, Ibrahim Khan.⁸ In the absence of a bold policy on the part of the viceroy, the Mughal administration in Kamrup was confronted with external and internal dangers. The rebellions of Sheikh Ikrahim Krori and Sanatan, the repeated attacks of Dharmanarayan and his allies, the treachery of Satrajit, all were the direct results of the change of the Viceroy of Bengal and the apathetic policy of the Imperial court.

⁸Borah, M.I., Op.cit., p.442.

Gait, on the authority of Padishahnama says that the failure of the Mughal expedition against Assam led to the disposition of Qasim Khan from office.⁹ This view has been accepted by S.N. Bhattacharya.¹⁰ M.I. Borahon the basis of the writings of 'Rogers and Beveridge' says that the orders for Qasim Khan's dismissal and the appointment of Ibrahim Khan were issued by the Emperor Jahangir on the 8th April, 1617 A.D.¹¹ The fact that the outgoing viceroy opposed the incoming Viceroy with arms on his way to Jahangirnagar at Jatrapur shows that the former was not willing to relinquish charge of office. Qasim Khan was, however, defeated by Ibrahim Khan Fath Jang.¹²

Evidently, Ibrahim Khan Fath Jang, brother of Queen Nur Jahan was appointed Viceroy after a lapse of one year of the disaster. The arrival of the viceroy designate was again delayed by about six months as he arrived at Dacca at the end of the year 1617. Gait admits that Ibrahim Khan assumed his office after the battle of Ranihat which took place sometime at the end of the year 1617 between the hill Rajas and the Mughals.¹³

⁹Gait, Op.cit., p.111.

¹⁰Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., p.186.

¹¹Bora, M.I., Op.cit., p.844 (notes-13).

¹²Ibid., p.442.

¹³Gait, Op.cit., p.69.

Judging from this view, it may be concluded that although Qasim Khan was held responsible for the ill-fated Assam campaign, the Imperial authority at Delhi failed to take prompt action to replace him. This indicates its lack of interest in the north-east frontier. Secondly, the delay in the execution of the orders of appointment testifies to it. Nevertheless, the new Viceroy showed his keen interest in the north-east frontier. He immediately sent a strong force under the command of Sheikh Kamal to restore order in Kamrup.¹⁴

While the Mirza was busy with putting down the revolt of the Krori, the military affairs at Pandu again took a serious turn. Mirza Yusuf Barlas who had been defending the fort of Pandu sent urgent message to Nathan through Balabhadra Das describing the attack of Raja Dharmanarayan and the hill Rajas. It was also made clear by Mirza Yusuf that unless substantial reinforcement, came, it would not be possible to defend the fort.¹⁵ Large numbers of soldiers had, in the meantime, been killed on both sides. On receipt of the message, Mirza Nathan immediately despatched Israr Guli with a fleet to the aid of Mirza Yusuf with the assurance that further reinforcements would follow in quick

¹⁴ Borah, M.I., Op.cit., p.447.

¹⁵ Ibid., p.452.

succession. Masud Qasim Khan, the personal messenger of Nathan accompanied Islam Quli to Pandu to get a first hand knowledge of the affairs there. After studying the situation he returned to Hajo and described how the Mughals were attacked by the enemies through cannons, ballistas and rockets. The Mirza was also informed that two successive assaults were repulsed by the Imperialists. Considering the position hopeless, the Mirza sent special messenger to the Viceroy asking for strong reinforcement. On being informed, the Viceroy sent urgent orders to Qulij Khan, the jagirdar designate of Koch territory to march quickly to assist the Imperial officer at Patol.¹⁶ Reinforcement was also rushed-in to Pandu under Islam Quli assisted by Suna Ghazi, Adil Khan and other admirals of Musa Khan. Heavy fighting followed. Both sides engaged their full forces. Dharmanarayan ultimately fled with his brother. The Mughals repulsed the enemy attack and achieved victory. This gave them temporary relief and now a section of their forces was withdrawn to Hajo in order to engage them towards suppression of the revolt of Sheikh Ibrahim Krori. Hostilities with the Assamese stopped for few months. Mirza Nathan considered this victory as a prelude to another victory

¹⁶Eora, M.I., Op.cit., pp.456-457.

¹⁷Ibid. p.459.

over the rebel officer Krori. All attempts to capture the rebel officer through conciliatory means, in the meantime failed.

At this stage rumour spread that the King of Assam had sent a force to the rescue of the Sheikh. Apparently the Imperial officers were alarmed at this news. However, they carried on their operations and after a hot pursuit the Sheikh was captured and his head was cut off. The head was then sent to the Subadar along with a detailed report of the victory.¹⁸ The King of Assam did not send any reinforcement as apprehended. Subsequently the Mughal officers responsible for the suppression of the revolt were rewarded by the subadar with promotion in their ranks.

Before the outbreak of the rebellion, Sheikh Ibrahim exchanged some correspondences with the Ahom King. With a view to securing Ahom help, he sent a messenger to the Ahom court with this message - "If you help me with men and money and make the King of the Koches, I will exert my utmost valour and will be devoted to you and never allow the enemies of Delhi to proceed against you as long as I live."¹⁹ The Krori further suggested

¹⁸Borah, M.I., Op.cit. p.443.

¹⁹Borah, M.I., Op.cit., p.443.

that unless a joint action was taken at that stage against their common enemy, the Imperial authority would send a big army to Assam only to cut root and branch of the Ahoms. The narrative of Mirza Nathan further states that the Raja of Assam welcomed this proposal but was reluctant to believe the Shaikh. Pratap Singha replied that the Shaikh first lead the war in order to prove his sincerity. The Ahom King further promised to help and rather install him as the King of the Koches with valuable presents if the latter could send one or two Mughal officers alive or dead.²⁰ This view has been accepted by S.N.Bhattacharya when he says that the Ahom monarch suspected the bonafides of the rebel and in order to test his sincerity, he advised the Sheikh to commence hostilities forthwith, thus preparing the ground for intervention.²¹ It is, however not true as stated by the learned author that the first Ahom intervention in Kamrup took place on behalf of the Krori.²² Gait admits that the Assam King promised to help on condition that the Shaikh first drove out the Imperialists from Hajo. He further says that although he (Shaikh) was assisted by the Ahoms, the Mughals defeated and killed him.²³ The two views

²⁰Bora, M.I., Op.cit.,

²¹Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., p.247.

²²Ibid.

²³Gait, Op.cit., p.69.

of the learned author seem to be contradictory. The reaction of the rebel officer on receipt of the reply from the Ahom King was also not known. Mirza Nathan says that the Assam King was always apprehending the conspiracy of the Mughals. Before the rebellion broke out, the Ahom King sent an envoy to the Shaikh to get a first hand situation report. At that stage the Mirza tried to win over the rebel officer through pacific means. In order to create misunderstanding and apprehension in the mind of the Assamese envoy, the Mirza rode on the same elephant with the Shaikh.²⁴ On seeing this, the Assamese envoy apparently apprehended conspiracy.

There is no record in any Assamese chronicle to show that the King of Assam either exchanged messages with the rebel officer or helped the latter with men and money. It appears the Ahom king desired to exploit the situation by a threat of intervention in favour of the rebels. At the initial stage they might have exchanged ideas with the rebel chief. But there is nothing to show that the Ahoms really helped the rebels in view of the fact that the allies had already decided

²⁴Bora, M.I., Op.cit., p.451.

to expel the Bangals (Mughals) from Kamrup. The Ahoms failed to utilise the opportunity and merely remained content with capturing the fort of Randu with the help of the allies. Swargadeo Pratap Singha expressed his shock and resentment at the death of the Sheikh and also over his failure to give timely assistance to the latter. He now realised that the rebel officer was motivated by sincere consideration and that it was a mistake not to have offered help to him. Mirza Nathan says that the destruction of the Sheikh was due to the treacherous conduct of the Assamese officers.²⁵ However, there is nothing to substantiate this prejudiced views.

The suppression of the rebellion was followed by more serious troubles in Kamrup. Hajo was threatened with attacks from the Ahoms. Padmeswar Gogoi says;

"Sheikh Ibrahim's death hastened the preparation at Gargaon for sending a powerful army to Guwahati. Hso-Hseng-pha (Susenpha) bitterly criticised the conduct of the lower Assam generals in allowing the Sheikh to be killed in that manner".²⁶

This observation is apparently based on the narrative of Mirza Nathan (Baharistan-i-Ghaybi). In the absence of any record in the local Buranjis, it is difficult to

²⁵Borah, M.I., Op.cit., p.479.

²⁶Gogoi, P., The Tai and the Tai Kingdom, p.357.

accept this view. The Ahoms, however, put heavy pressure on the Mughals along with their allies at Pandu repeatedly in order to divert the attention of the Hajo administration.

Meanwhile Dharmanarayan took possession of the fort of Pandu after evacuation of this place by the Imperialists. Thereupon Mirza Nathan again sent Mirza Yusuf Barlas to recapture Pandu. While on the move, the Mughals came to know about heavy concentration of enemy forces at Pandu and so they halted and pitched their camp at Jharighat, a charland, situated between Hajo and Pandu.²⁷ Dharmanarayan sent urgent messages to the Ahom officers who were already on the march under royal orders to proceed quickly to Pandu. The Ahom force consisted of innumerable elephants and boats under the command of Buragohain, Hati Barua, Rajkhowa, Khargharia Phukan. They all rushed to Pandu and then proceeded further west and encamped at the village Bardadhigaon.²⁸

Realising the gravity of the situation after receiving report from Yusuf about the strength of the enemy, the Mirza sent more forces under Raja Satrajit

²⁷Borah, M.I., Op.cit., p.480.

²⁸Ibid.

with his Hindu officer Badridas. They were ordered to stay at Jharighat against their will and constructed two forts on either side of the Brahmaputra where its course was comparatively narrow. The attempts however, failed. At this critical juncture, Satrajit fell back from the fighting line and returned to Hajo, followed by others. None of the Mughal officers had the courage to face the formidable combined allied forces. The news of this retreat was reported by Balabhadra Das and Badridas to the Mirza who was then sick. Mirza Nathan expressed his anguish at the cowardly actions of the officers. At his distress he despatched Balabhadra Das and Haji Lang to Barnagar with a message to Quli Khan seeking his help. As he had a small force at his disposal, he in turn, sent a message to the Chiefs of Jahangirnagar to come to the rescue of the Imperial forces of Kamrup immediately.²⁹ Soon heavy reinforcements arrived from Bengal. Sheikh Kamal who had been sent by the new Viceroy earlier, also arrived and joined them.

After reoccupation of Pandu, the Ahoms were advancing towards Hajo. Preparations for a grand attack on Hajo now made. A strong fort was constructed on the bank of the river Shesha near Hajo under special instructions of the monarch.

²⁹Borah, M.I., Op.cit., p.483.

Several small forts were also erected on the south-eastern frontier of Hajo. The three Gohains were ordered to stay at Shesha to keep strict vigilance on the movement of the enemies. Lachampam Bhandari and Raidingia Barua were especially instructed not to attack the Mohammedans without the order of the King.³⁰ A strong naval force was also despatched under the joint command of Laluk Phukan and Lasham Siring with their new titles Neog Phukan. As advised by the Deodhais, they advanced to Hajo through the river Shesha. The Gohains, the Baruas and other high officials pleaded the positive prohibition of the king to advance. Other prominent leaders waiting at Shesha fort were Raja Dharma Narayan, Mani Konwar of Dhakeri (Uttarkul); Jadu Deka, the Chutia Prince; the Dimarua Raja and the Hill Rajas of Dakhinkol.³¹ The Ahom strategy of the invasion was to make a three-pronged attack, both by land and water. A division of the army waited on the foot of the Talaya hill (Mak Kuberachal - about 5 miles north east of Hajo). For sometime the Ahoms were watching the movement of the Mohammedans. At this stage some Ahom soldiers were killed by the enemies while moving round to study the enemy position. This action of the Mughals was definitely provocative to their

³⁰Barua, G.C., Ahom Buranji, p.101.

³¹Barah, M.I., Baharistan, p.488.; Bhuyan, S.K., Kamrupar Buranji, pp.24-25.; Gait, A History of Assam, p.112.

counterpart. In the meantime, the Ahom spies reported to the Neogs about the advance of Mohammedan horses. The Neogs thought the time opportune and without wasting time, ordered their forces to strike at the enemies, according to the maxim - 'He never loses who strikes first'. The three Gohains and the Deodhai Pandit and the Bharali Barua prohibited the Ahom officers from taking the offensive and advised them to wait for orders from their monarch.³² According to Baharistan, the Assam Raja ordered to attack the enemy first. A letter was reported to have been addressed by the king to his officers which read thus - "As the armies of Delhi have not begun their attack and as you have already reached near them with a large army, it is proper for you to begin the battle without further delay."³³ The local chronicles, however, gave a different account. The Assamese forces acting on the King's orders first stayed at Pandu. At the request from his officers stationed at Pandu, the King sent one Laluk of Borgohain family and one Lacham serving as War Neog with supreme power to lead the forces to Hajo. They were also empowered to behead anyone who would act contrary to their orders.³⁴ The time was, however, not found opportune in view of

³²Barua, G.C., Ahom Buranji, p.101.; Gait, A History of Assam, p.112.

³³Borah, M.I., Baharistan, p.487.

³⁴Baruah, G.C., Op.cit., pp.487

adverse omens predicted but the Deodhai Pandits. King Pratap Singha sent special messengers from Samdhara to the officers of the Assamese expedition not to take aggressive part till they would get final orders from him.³⁵ Pratap Singha took serious exception to the action of some hot-headed commanders which showed that the attack was ill-timed, and not in accordance with his advice.

Sheikh Kamal, after his arrival at Hajo ordered the Imperial officers to proceed as far as to village Talia and to construct a fort there. The Imperial force was now well equipped with contingent of forces of Culi Khan, Dust Beg, the fleet of the twelve Bhuyans of Bengal, the regular force of Mirza Nathan besides those of Sheikh Kamal and Satrajit. The details of the war are narrated in Baharistan-i-Ghaysi as follows,

"The Burha Gohain at the head of one hundred thousand infantry was to march along the hilly and jungly bank of the Brahmaputra towards the main part of Hajo. Hati Barua and Raja Baldev and Samuroid Kayeth with a force of two hundred thousand infantry, one hundred and eighty elephants (including heated elephants) to call upon Sheikh Kamal. The Rajkhowa and the Khargharia were to take the command of the fleet of four thousand war boats against the fleet of the Twelve Bhuyans. The eighteen hill Rajas were to take their position with all their hill men on the bank of the river

³⁵Barua, G.C., Op.cit., p.102.

in aid of their fleet and not allow the enemies to escape to Dakhinkol. One thousand war boats were sent to the mouth of the river Fawrawa to the rear of the Imperial army in order to block the passage of ration and communication from Dacca. In short the Imperial army was brought to bay like games in a hunt."³⁶

The accounts of the operations have been precisely given in the Ahom Buranji and the Kamrupar Buranji. All the accounts agree with the view that Hajo was besieged from all sides by the Assamese (February/March, 1618 A.D.).

One day at midnight, a contingent of Ahom force led by the Bargohain, Lai Gohain and the Saidingia Barua advanced through the hilly and jungly tracts to the hillock of Sultan Ghiyasud-din Awliya (Poa-Macca, considered to be a holy shrine by the Mussalmans). Another troop under the Bor Gohain, the Borpatra Gohain, Moni Ponwar and Abboypuria proceeded forward by up road from the south towards Hajo fort. The Mussalmans could not anticipate the midnight attack and a fierce battle took place. At the initial stage most of the devotees of the shrine were massacred. But soon after reinforcement, the Mughals under the command of Dust Beg and Qulij Khan, defeated the Assamese. Large number of soldiers were killed and the rest retreated.³⁷ The elephants of the Assamese could not stand long against the cavalry of the enemy. The first battle of the expedition ended in disaster.

³⁶Barua, M.I., Op.cit., p.448.

³⁷Ibid., pp.449, .

Barua, G.C., Op.cit., p.103.

Early next morning, Dharmanarayan, Hati Barua and Samuroid Kayeth advanced in awe-inspiring formations with a huge army and innumerable elephants. Sheikh Kamal arranged his army in collaboration with his brothers. Satrajit and some mansabdars confronted the enemy attack. At this juncture the Imperial fleet of the Zamindars was also attacked by the Assam fleet and put to great straits. Mirza Nathan who was then at the main fort of Hajo, hearing the news of the attack from all sides sent a message to Qulij Khan giving details of the position in various fronts. He also promised to march to the help of Qulij Khan if required. Sheikh Kamal, realising the hopeless position, sent urgent messages to Mirza Nathan for help through Pandas. The Mirza rushed in to the help of Kamal and fought gallantly against the enemies.³⁸

Fortune favoured the Imperialists. A great victory was achieved. This was considered by Nathan as one of the foremost military conquest attained by the grace of God. The Hati Barua, Paja Dharmanarayan, Samuroid Kayeth ran away in disgrace along with their forces.³⁹ Thereafter, the Assamese concentrated their force on the southern side of the hill. In the mean time, the

³⁸Borah, N.I., Op.cit., p.491.

³⁹Ibid., p.492.

Assamese fleet was advancing towards Hajo after defeating the Imperial fleet. This gave an opportunity to the land force to renew its attack. Thus the Mughal forces were put to great straits. After defeating the enemy in the eastern front, Mirza Nathan and Sheikh Kanai came to the rescue of Qulij Khan. The three generals now prepared a new strategy to defend their main fort at Hajo. A fierce battle ensued. The scattered Imperial fleet also took its position. At last the Mughal triumphed and the vanquished allies fled away with heavy losses.⁴⁰

The failure of the expedition produced immediate and far-reaching results in the history of Ahom politics. In terms of casualties the losses were terrible. Thakbak Buragohain, Mani Konwar, Mon Hazarika fell fighting while a large number were killed and wounded. Many large ships and some elephants were lost. The Mughals also seized immense quantities of guns, shields and other war equipments. The rest of the force first retreated to Pandu and then to Kajalimukh.⁴¹

In Baharistan, Mirza Nathan has given an accounts of the losses on the Ahom side thus - 'When surveyed

⁴⁰Borah, M.I., Op.cit., pp.494-495.

⁴¹Wade, J.P., (ed.) Benudhar Sharma, 'An Account of Assam, p.282.; Bhuyan, S.K., Deodhai Asom Buranji, pp.63-65; Gait, A History of Assam, p.109; Bhuyan, S.K., Kamrupar Buranji, p.25. Barua, G.C., Ahom Buranji, p.103.

after the retreat of the Assamese forces, out of four thousand war boats, only two hundred escaped. The enemy lost three thousand and seven hundred men in the field of battle; double of this number died in the adjacent places and more than ten thousand wounded fled away. On the Imperial side, two hundred attained martyrdom and double this number were wounded. The heads of the dead enemies were cut off and loaded in the boats and were sent to Jahangirnagar to Khan Fath Jang along with elephants and different kinds of booties."⁴² While admitting the fact that the Ahoms engaged a huge force, the description about the amount of losses seems to be an exaggeration.

Pratap Singha was extremely angry when he heard the news of the disaster. He at once ordered an enquiry into the failure of the expedition and asked the scattered forces to rally at Samdhara. Laluk Phukan, Lacham Siring and some others were held responsible and so put to death. Khamprat Bar Gohain and Tipani Raja who were also found guilty were put into a cage where they were allowed to die of hunger.⁴³ The king then returned to the capital and performed the Medammemephi (death ceremony).⁴⁴

⁴²Borah, M.I., Baharistan, p.497.

⁴³Bhuyan, S.K., Kamrupar Buranji, p.25; Bhuyan, S.K., Deodhai Asom Buranji, p.66.; Gait, Op.cit., p.112.; Barua, G.C., Op.cit., p.104.

⁴⁴Barua, G.C., Op.cit., p.104.; Bhuyan, S.K., Deodhai Asom Buranji, p.66.

It may be admitted that the invasion of Hajo was not properly conducted. Pratap Singh who was staying at the Samdhara fort during the period of conflict failed to command the forces in right directions. The high officials were anxiously waiting for the final order of their monarch and at that stage they were asked to launch the attack by the Neog Phukans. The Mughals on the contrary, conducted the military affairs exclusively from Hajo. So the failure of the expedition may be partly attributed to the King for his lack of proper guidance at the critical time. The Mughals acted with foresight with reinforcement from Bengal. The irony of the entire episode was that Pratap Singha remained content by executing most of the top ranking officers engaged in the invasion of Hajo. The Ahoms now abandoned their policy of aggression and instead launched a policy of peace and consolidation.

With a view to securing efficient administration in the western part of his Kingdom and also to have proper vigilance on Mughal activity, Pratap Singha soon created a post of high ranking officer with the title, 'Bar Phukan'. Langi Panisia who distinguished himself in restoring order among the panic-stricken Ahom officers after the battle of Hajo was appointed to the post.

It was also felt that a responsible officer of the rank of Bar Phukan (governor) would be able to conduct diplomatic relations not only with Bengal government but also with the hill Chieftains on the frontier. Langi Panisia was accordingly appointed the first Bar Phukan with his headquarters at Kajalimukh.⁴⁵ The tracts of the territory west of Kaliabar were placed under his jurisdiction while the area east of Kaliabar and outside the jurisdiction of the Bargohain and the Buragohain was placed under another functionary of equal rank, known as Bar Barua. The first incumbent of this post was Momai Tamuli, the King's brother-in-law.⁴⁶

Shortly after the war at Hajo, dissensions occurred among the Mughal officers of Kamrup. Mirza Nathan in his narrative describes how he was put to trouble by the conspiracy of Sheikh Kamal, Quli Khan, Satrajit and others. Jealous of Nathan's calibre, they sent false reports to the Subadar stating that the victory was achieved by them and not by Mirza Nathan. The Mirza was further aggrieved when he came to know

⁴⁵Gait, Op.cit., p.112.; Bhuyan, S.K. Kamrupar Buranji, p.23.

⁴⁶Sharma, Benudhar, Doorbin, p.3.

that Chisti Khan had been appointed the Chief Commander of Kamrup thus ignoring his claim. These officers went a step further to frustrate the attempts of Nathan to see the Subadar personally. The intrigues of these officers ultimately compelled him to leave Kamrup with a handful of followers for Dacca. At a later stage he was entrusted by the Subadar to the task of conquest of Dakhinkol and was suitably rewarded.

Mirza Nathan dominated Mughal politics in Kamrup as Chief Commander of the Imperial army for more than two years (1616-1618). He reorganised the administration of Kamrup and restored order at a stage when the morale of the Mughal was at a low ebb. He was engaged in a series of battles against Dharmananayan, the eighteen hill Rajas besides the Assamese and defended the Mughal territory. The suppression of the rebellion of Ibrahim Krori was another brilliant example of his courage and tactfulness. He cleverly alienated the Ahoms from giving military help to the Sheikh. At last he defended Hajo from the enemy attack and thereby the entire Koch territory was saved. But his sincere and heroic services were not duly recognised by the Subadar at that instance

⁴⁷Borah, M.I., Op.cit., pp.497-498.

of some selfish and jealous officers. with the result that a loyal and able officer had to leave the frontier in disgrace.

The state of affairs in Kamrup was still far from settled in view of the recent external aggression and internal revolt. The situation was further disturbed by sporadic Koch insurrections. On the request of the Viceroy of Bengal, Ibrahim Khan to the Mughal Emperor Jahangir, Lakhshmi Narayan was released (March 10, 1618) from detention. It was expected that his presence might ease the situation caused by the revolts of the Koch chiefs. He was offered with gifts of a robe of honour, an Iraqi horse, a magnificent elephant, a bejewelled sword belt and a bejewelled dagger belt.⁴⁸ The viceroy immediately sent him to Hajo to render help to the Imperialists (Spring, 1618). After confinement for about three and half years, Lakhshmi Narayan got back his personal freedom and was reinstated in his kingdom as a vassal with great honour. But he was not destined to rule any longer⁴⁹ Sheikh Kamal, an old and experienced officer now became the Fouzdar of Kamrup (Hajo) and with his initiative he secured the permission

⁴⁸Borah, M.I., Op.cit., pp.521, 848.

⁴⁹Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., p.159.

of the Subadar to get the services of Lakshmi Narayan. He did not govern Koch Behar but left in charge of his son as before. "An era of honourable exile from his kingdom now sets in."⁵⁰ He continued to stay at Patia with a contingent of troops and aided the Imperialists in consolidating the authority in Uttarkol and Bakhinkol regions. He does not appear to have taken the field in person but he frequently placed his troops at the disposal of his colleagues, particularly Mirza Nathan, the astute and energetic conqueror of Bakhinkol, with whom he was on term of great intimacy.⁵¹ At a later stage he joined the revolt of Shah Jahan in Bengal. He continued to remain loyal to the Emperor till his death in 1627 A.D. Another Bengal Zaminder, Musa Khan displayed similar faithfulness and loyalty in serving the Bengal government distinguishing himself especially in the conquest of Tippera besides his many conquests in Kamrup.

Sir J.N. Sarkar says that about the middle of the year 1618 A.D., Madhusudan, a nephew of Lakshmi Narayan seized the pargana of Koroibari but Musa Khan, the Imperial commander suppressed it.⁵² According to

⁵⁰Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., p.160,; Borah, M.I., Op.cit., p.522.

⁵¹Ibid.,

⁵²Sarkar, Sir J.N., History of Bengal, p.300.

Baharistan, Madhusudan, son of Jisketu (Brishaketu), a relation of Raja Lakshmi Narayan marched with his forces to Dakhinkol and seized Koroibari, a south western part of Kamrup. The Subadar sent Chand Bahadur as Chief of the army against Madhusudan. Musa Khan and many other zamindars accompanied the Mughal force. They captured the Koch Chief alive and brought him to Khizrpur only to produce before the Subadar.⁵³ In pursuance of his liberal policy, the subadar treated him kindly and secured his services for the government of Kamrup. The incident occurred just after the departure of Mirza Nathan from Hajo. There is no reference in the Ahom chronicles about this incident. This may be due to the fact that the Ahoms were not involved therein. At a subsequent period, Madhusudan helped the Mughals against the Assamese led by Dharma Narayan at the battle of Minori.⁵⁴ As he accepted the Imperial vassalage, it was very likely that he helped them later on.

The protracted wars accompanied by Koch insurrections in Sarkar Kamrup exhausted the energy of both the Ahoms and the Mughals. They realised the necessity

⁵³Bora, M.I., Op.cit., pp.503-504.

⁵⁴Sharma, Benudhar, 'Dakhinkol' - Souvenir of the Assam Sahitya Sabha, Saka 1882 - 'Palasbarir Ditiye Kasare'.; Sarkar, Sir J.N., Op.cit., p.300.

of peace and order in the Koch territory. At this stage Lakhsmi Narayan, with the vain hope of becoming independent in recognition of his services, initiated a peace proposal between the two belligerents. He first discussed the matter with Shaikh Farul, the fouzdar of Hajo. Then he sent his personal envoy, Birukaji to the Ahom officers stationed at Isakhranta Chowki, on the north bank of the Brahmaputra (opposite to present Guwahati). The Ahom officers in turn escorted him to Kajalimukh to report the matter to the Bar Ihukan. The envoy was detained there for sometime pending receipt of formal order of audience with the King. Swargadeo Pratap Singh welcomed the proposal and despatched Dharadhar Kataki to Kajalimukh so as to bring Bira Kaji to the capital by false promises.⁵⁵

After arrival at Gargaon, Biru Kaji reported to the King thus - "The Mussalman king wishes to make peace and to establish hat and fat as a mark of friendship. O' great King, I, your slave have been sent to by Lakhsmi Narayan to inform you about the matter. Pratap Singha replied - "If Lakhsmi Narayan can manage

⁵⁵Bhuyan, S.K., Deodhai Asom Buranji, p.117.; Bhuyan, S.K., Kamrupar Buranji, (ed), p.25. ; Barua, G.C., Ahom Buranji, p.107.; Wade, J.F., An Account of Assam, p.288.

to put a stop to the war that has been going on by making peace, I shall allow you to go back to your country as early as possible. But if he cannot, I shall not allow you to go back."⁵⁶ The conversation testifies to the fact that Pratap Singha was keen to restore peace in the frontier permanently. He asked the Koch envoy to stay in his capital for sometime only to prove the fidelity of the peace proposal. He was given quarters at Baghchua to live under proper supervision. The narrative of Mirza Nathan is silent about the peace overture. This was due to the fact that the Mirza was engaged in the Dakhinkol operations at that time and was not aware of the developments in the administration of Hajo. Moreover, he was not on good terms with the fouzdar.

The peace proposal was not welcomed by Satrajit, the thanadar of Pandu. This officer wanted that the conflicts should continue for long to serve his interest. Satrajit became active in frustrating the peace negotiation and started conspiring with the Ahom officers. He made secret correspondences with the Assam King. Perhaps he entertained the idea of becoming an independent chief at Pandu with the help of the Ahoms. With

⁵⁶Gait, *Op.cit.*, p.113.; Bhuyan, S.K. Panrupar Buranji, pp.26-27.

this aim in view, he met the Bar Phukan at Kajalimukh and then sent his minor son to the Ahom court with rich presents by way of paying homage to the King. Satrajit also despatched Umar and Kanai, the two traders with a personal letter to the Swargadeo.⁵⁶ The party was also accompanied by a Sajati from Kajalimukh to Garoan. The letter reads as follows : "I become the son of the Swargadeo. Your majesty may treat me as your son or your servant. The details will be explained by the traders." (Feb. 1620). Pratap Singha accepted this proposal considering it as an act of friendship. In reply and as a mark of friendship the Assam King sent Kamal Lochan Kataki to Satrajit with a silver jhari (pitcher), a spout of gold. The queen also sent one of Satrajit's harem, a suit of silk riha-ma as a token of love. The Swargadeo also desired that Satrajit should drink water from the jhar that he sent just like a son (baby) took his mother's milk. Besides these presents, the King sent as present for Satrajit's minor son, an elephant and two thousand silver coins. Pratap Singha continued to exchange regular emissaries with Satrajit for sometime as he thought

that this friendship would serve as an effective check on the further advance of the Mohammedans.

One of the reasons which tempted Satrajit to come close to the Ahoms might be that the incident of sacrifice of his son at the altar of the Goddess Umakhyia was still fresh in his mind. Karamchan, son of Satrajit was sacrificed at the altar of the Goddess Umakhyia after the battle of Samdhara. Many more Mughal Commanders were executed by the Ahoms after the latter's victory in the battle. He thus wanted to take vengeance upon the Ahoms at the opportune moment. He was also afraid of losing his power and position if peace was allowed to be restored between the two powers. 'A traitor by nature, he had been false to the Mohammedans on many occasions, as he now intrigued with the Ahoms.' He further induced the local Chiefs to revolt against the Mughals.

In the course of the exchange of ideas, the Ahom King sent Kalia Katakai to Satrajit with some presents. But on way to Pandu the articles (presents) were lost. At this Satrajit expressed his sorrow and in order to

please the Katakis, presented him with clothes. The boatmen escorting the Katakis later misrepresented the incident to Swargadeo in such a manner that the Swargadeo considered the action as humiliating to him for receiving presents from the Mughal officer without his (King) knowledge. Although he was ordered to be arrested by the King, he was found not guilty after an enquiry. Satrajit could continue the friendly relations with the Ahom king for sometime through his diplomatic skill. But later on his various mischievous acts were detected.

The period of two years (1616-1618 A.D.) is marked by incessant wars between the Imperialists and the allied powers led by the Ahoms. This was accompanied by sporadic Koch insurrections in different parts of Kamrup. Another important event of this period was the rebellion of the Mughal officer Prori. All the challenges had been adequately met by the Imperialists. Mirza Nathan can be regarded as the real hero of the Mughal victory. The Assamese for the time being abandoned their aggressive policy. Their allies however, made persistent attempts to subvert the Mughal authority in south Kamrup. The Mughals also

gave up their traditional policy of Imperialism for some time realising their past mistake. They now adopted a policy of consolidation within their own territory. Some efforts were also made towards conclusion of peace and stability by both the powers. But these attempts were in vain and within a short time the two powers were involved in a fresh conflict.

C H A P T E R - V

REBELLION IN DAKHINKOL

The political scene in Dakhinkol turned into confusion due to the outbreak of a fresh rebellion after a short spell of nearly three months. The Mughals had still to reckon with the hostility of the chiefs of Dakhinkol. The rising tide of Mughal imperialism produced alarm among the various former Koch subjects and the hill Chieftains and they were gradually aware of insecurity. At the initial stage, the Ahoms remained aloof. There had been a series of sanguinary battles at various places, viz., Solmari, Sanbhur, Kandara, Fangjuli, Ranihat, Minori etc.. Dharma Narayan who had been scared, now took the opportunity to exert all his influence in enlisting the support of the hill Chieftains who had also become hostile to the Mughals. Patriotic and audacious as he was, Dharma Narayan could never accept for long the humiliation that he had suffered at Fajo. He had the statesmanship to see the far reaching consequences of the Mughal invasions in the north-east frontier. Mamu Govinda, another vassal Koch Chief of Beltola also made a common cause with other Koch leaders for liberation of their motherland. Thus preparation for another trial of strength began.

According to Kamrupar Buranji, the Sarkar Dakhinkol comprised the parganas of Sambhur, Mechpara, Kalanlu para (Malawpara), Baranti, Pushyatale, Garo Mahal, Gomarai, Dimaria and Pandu.¹ It, therefore, covered the area from the parganas of Mechpara and Sambhur in the west to the pargana of Pandu in the east. The area south of the river Brahmaputra of the modern districts of Goalpara and Kamrup was within Sarkar Dakhinkol. Further south of this region lay the hill tract, ruled and inhabited mostly by the independent Garos.

During the Koch-Mughal conflict, many Koch chiefs fled to Dakhinkol for safety with their followers and established there permanently. They had been scared away and not crushed. Apart from the Koch Chiefs, there were many tribal chieftains in different hill regions of Dakhinkol who were commonly styled as the 'Eighteen Hill Rajas', notable among them being the Rajas of Bari, Malawpara, Bholagaon, Barduwar, Boko, Lukiduwar, Pantan, Banagram, Chaygaon, Hangrabari, Dimarua, Hulothir and Bamun Raja.² They were mostly Garos and ruled independently but owed allegiance to the Koch King. Later they acknowledged Ahom suzerainty. They also paid moderate tribute occasionally to the Raja of Assam who courted

¹ Bhuyan, S.K., Kamrupar Buranji (ed), p.32.

² Forah, M.I., Bharistan-i-Ghaybi of Mirza Nathan, p.843.

the friendship of the independent mountaineers through commercial intercourse.³ According to Montgomery Martin,

"these Rajas of Kamrup were the original petty chiefs of the country, each of whom possessed a certain territory, which was assessed to furnish a certain number of pykes to the Kamrup King. They possessed every sort of jurisdiction, except the power to severe and in case of war, should take the field at the head of the pykes."⁴

The fact that they helped the Koch King Bali Narayan and the Assam King in the struggle against the Mughals amply proves that they remained loyal to their sovereign ruler. After the conquest of Kamrup, they refused to acknowledge Mughal sovereignty. Frequent mention has been made both in the local Buranjis and the Persian chronicles about the role of the hill Rajas in the Ahom-Mughal conflicts.

Ibrahim Khan found in Mirza Nathan, an able warrior, who had, in the meantime, displayed his courage and devotion to duties in the battle of Hajo. He was, however, not pleased to see the Mirza leaving Hajo at a State of Chaos and disorder. He was equally worried with the intrigues and dissensions in the Mughal camp. The Subadar, tired with the intrigues of the officers desired

³Buchanan, Hamilton, An Account of Asom, p.86.; Mackenzie, North Eastern Frontier etc., pp.245-249.

⁴Martin, M., Eastern India, Vol. V, p.619.

to avoid the association of the Mirza and asked him to put down the insurrection in Dakhinkol and to take the Sarkar as jagir in lieu of his services.⁵ The Mirza was really unhappy to receive such an order from the Subadar. He thought that the Nawab had failed to study the real state of affairs of Hajo leading to his misfortune. Moreover, he was tired of continuous war for which he needed rest urgently. Ultimately under pressure, he had to submit to the wishes of the Subadar.⁶

Parsuram, the chief of Solmari of Dakhinkol was alarmed at the activities of the Mughals in the wake of extension of the Mughal sphere of control over Dakhinkol. This Rabha Chief made plundering raids and had blocked the passage of transit of rations for the Imperial army in the former Koch territory. As a result the Mughals were put to great hardship.⁷ The news of the revolt of Parsuram evidently caused much anxiety to the Subadar.

Thus for nearly two years from April/May, 1618 the field of activity of the Mughals renewed in Dakhinkol. The history of this period is a story of struggle between the Mughals and the local chiefs of that region including the hill Rajas. The entire Mughal expedition explains

⁵Borah, M.I., Op.cit., p.502.

⁶Ibid., p.505.

⁷Borah, M.I., Op.cit., p.505; Bhattacharya, S.N., Mughal North East Frontier Policy, p.198.

the dogged tenacity and unwearied enterprise of the Mughals to extend and consolidate their authority. Mirza Nathan, the Commander of the expedition displayed his daring initiative and courage and ultimately brought victory to the empire.

The Mirza started from Rangamati with his regiment to Phulbari. There, he discussed the situation of Solmari with the Mughal officers, viz., Taj Khan and Taslim Khan. These two officers were serving in the pargana of Mechpara under the Jagirdarship of Qulij Khan. The Mughal force stationed under the disposal of the Jagirdar of Mechpara was no match for the forces of Parsuram. The Imperialists had already suffered terribly. In view of the weakness of the Imperial force the Mirza was required to recruit fresh soldiers locally to meet the challenge of the enemy. After making adequate preparations, the Mirza proceeded towards Solmari. Parsuram, in the mean time, anticipating the advance of the enemy marched on and like a flash beset a strong Mughal stockade at Kantabari, on the foot of the hill. A battle was fought but no decisive results were achieved by either side.

The next phase of the struggle shifted to Lambhur.* A fierce battle took place. Volleys of arrows,

*About 7 k.m. west to modern Agia town of Goalpara Sub-division.

guns, cannons and missiles were showered from the fort of Parsuram. But ultimately Parsuram was defeated and fled away leaving many casualties among the soldiers.⁸

Both sides struggled on and the trial of strength began at Kandara. The Imperialists attacked from three sides and after a stiff resistance Parsuram fled away with few followers to Makri hill. The news of the victory was sent to the Subadar and also to the fouzdar at Hajo through Balabhadra Das. In the rest of the expedition Mirza Nathan was ably assisted by Sadat Khan, Balabhadra Das, Nik Muhammad, Mir Abdus Salam, Mast Ali Beg and many others.

The attempt to capture Parsuram dragged on. After a hot pursuit, a battle took place again near the Makri hill. The attack was repulsed by Parsuram resulting in deaths of a large number of Mahammedan soldiers. At this stage, Kaltakari, a turbulent hill Chief with his son Tahana joined the forces of Parsuram. The Mirza sensing imminent danger of a combined attack, sent urgent message to Hajo for help. In the successive encounters that followed, the Mughals succeeded in annihilating the forces of Parsuram. The narrative of Mirza Nathan says that 2700 maunds of agar wood,

⁸Borah, M.I., Op.cit., p.507.

170 maunds of brass vessels, 45 boats and some more booties fell into the hands of the Mughals.⁹ Parsuram escaped to an unknown place.

Parsuram was regarded as the most powerful Bhabha Chief of western Dakhinkol.¹⁰ Throughout the entire period of struggle, Parsuram fought almost single handed and at no stage he joined the Koch rebels. This could suggest that he was a Bhabha Chief and that he had no link with the revolts of the other Koch Chiefs. The dogged determination and indomitable will with which he fought against the Mughals bear testimony to the fact that he was a great leader of men and equalled in rank with many contemporary chiefs of Dakhinkol.

Meanwhile more Koch rebellion took place in some parts of eastern Dakhinkol. The revolt of Parsuram set the spark that enkindled the feeling of discontent among various chiefs. The situation was further worsened due to the challenge of Koch Raja Balinarayan and his associates. Patriotic in heart and soul, whose life is a story of exciting struggle for the independence of motherland, Raja Balinarayan could hardly accept for long the humiliation that he had suffered at the hands

⁹ Borah, M.I., Op.cit., p.525.

¹⁰ Sharma, Benudhar, 'Dakhinkol', Souvenir of the Asom Sahitya Sabha, Saka, 1982 - Nalasarir Vatiye Kasare, p.18.

of the Mughals. He exerted all his influences to get the support of the hill chiefs as well as the Assamese. Apparently, these hill Chiefs considered the cause of the Koch Raja as their own as the Mughal's aggressive policy had threatened their position also. Hence they decided to join hands with Balinarayan. The Koches also, by and large were determined to defend their land in Dakhinkol. Thus a new dimension to the struggle was added - a national rising to defeat the enemies.

Samuroid Kayeth, the Chief Commander of the forces of Balinarayan made preparations in the Rangdan region to meet the enemy. He was the most formidable enemy of the Mughals in Dakhinkol. As a first step he constructed two strong forts, one at Amjunga and the other at Rangjuli.* The combined opposition to the Mughal threat thus posed a serious challenge to the Imperial authority. The situation in the pargana of Gambhur was also far from satisfactory as Parsuram and other rebels were yet to be crushed. With courage and determination the Mirza carried on his mission. He proceeded to Amjunga with a strong force leaving Post Muhammad and Balabhadra Das

*Rangjuli and Amjunga are two adjacent places on the side of the Rangjuli hills in South Kamrup.

at Solmari.¹¹ At this stage Mirza Nathan received reports through the spies that Farsuram and Narmu Govinda of Beltola were moving towards the fort of Amjunga along with members of their families. Two Mughal regiments intersected them on the way. The Members of the family of Narmu were captured but he along with Farsuram managed to escape.

Acting with great energy but without adequate preparations Samuroid challenged the enemy at Amjunga. A fierce battle was fought. The Mughals met with severe reverses at the initial stage. But they soon strengthened their position with grand strategy. Consequently, the Koches were compelled to desert the fort without fighting.¹²

The theatre of struggle now shifted to Rangjuli, an extremely strong fort with large and well equipped garrison. It was a formidable task indeed to seize the fort at a stage when the strength of the Imperial force had much deteriorated due to loss of large number of soldiers at Amjunga. Nevertheless, leaving the fort of Amjunga, the Imperialists marched to the fort of the Garo hills and then pitched their camp. The Mirza felt the need for reinforcement of the Imperial force as the

¹¹Borah, M.I., Op.cit., p.527.

¹²Ibid., p.528.

battle of Anjunga proved to be a great blow to the Mughals. With the help of the tribals Mirza Nathan recruited 4000 Garos in his regiment. The Imperialists then marched to the fort of Rangjuli. The siege of the fort dragged on throughout the day. Unable to resist, the Imperialists ultimately retreated. Soon after this incident about seven hundred Rabha soldiers deserted to the enemy camp.

At this critical juncture the rising of the hillmen at the outskirts of the hill seriously engaged the attention of the Mirza. Evidently, these hillmen also rose in rebellion against the Mughals due to latter's aggressive policy. The Mughals terrorised the villages by destroying and burning their houses. About five hundred men were brought as captives and among them was a Muslim leader, Jamal Khan and another Chief, Terabai, probably a Garo.¹³ Jamal Khan might be a fugitive who had fled to this region during the earlier Koch-Mughal conflict. Two Koch leaders, Balai Laskar and Jadu Nayak resisted the attack but failed to carry on for long. Although the rebellion was widespread, the native people suffered from lack of organisation and became victims of atrocities. About seventeen hundred

¹³Borah, M.I., Op.cit., p.530.

Koch rebels were taken prisoners from the villages of Baranti pargana.¹⁴

The seize of the Rangjuli fort however, continued. At this stage the arrival of a strong contingent of force from Hajo under Raja Satrajit strengthened the position of the Mughals. On the Koch side, Samuroid, the Commander was ably assisted by Mamu Govinda and his son-in-law, Jadu Nayak, Balai Laskar and others. The son-in-law of Mamu was killed in the encounter and with this the Koch army almost lost their position. Nevertheless, the fort continued to be under a state of seize.

The fort of Rangjuli was considered to be the strongest of all the forts. The native leaders engaged all their energies to defend it. Having received an urgent message from the Koch general, Raja Baldev despatched a strong regiment consisting of the soldiers of the Eighteen Hill Rajas and also the Koches for the defence of the fort. It is mentioned in Baharistan-i-Ghaybi that the aforesaid regiment included - Assamese soldiers also and was commanded by the Rajkhowa.¹⁵ There is no reference however, in any local Buranjis to show that the Assamese were actually involved in the struggle

¹⁴Borah, P.I., Op.cit., p.541.

¹⁵Ibid., p.541.

at this stage. It is a fact that at a later stage, sometime in September 1619 A.D., the Ahoms came to the help of Bali Narayan who was attacked by the Mughals.¹⁶ The reference made in Baharistan about the despatch of the Assamese force to Rangjuli may be an illusion. Probably the Mirza apprehended the Assamese intervention as Bali Narayan happened to be an ally and a vassal of the Assam Raja.

Meanwhile one Gobinda Sardar of Rechadhari village of Baranti pargana for the safety of his life surrendered to the Mughals while they were plundering the village. He was induced to join the Mughals and help in detecting the Koch King Bali Narayan. The Mughals organised a conspiracy in order to get the services of the Sardar and accordingly promised to make the latter the Chief Raja over all the eighteen Hill Rajas in lieu of his services. As a mark of encouragement the Sardar was accorded with suitable robes of honour.¹⁷

So renewed preparations were made with the advice of Govinda Sardar to attack the fort of Rangjuli which was yet to be conquered. A Koch regiment was also

¹⁶Gait, E.A., A History of Assam, p.113.

¹⁷Borah, M.I., Op.cit., p.549.; Bhattacharyya, S.N., Mughal's North East Frontier Policy, p.194.

sent from Hajo under the command of Patikanta, son of Sarba Gosain, the uncle of Raja Farikshit. Raja Bhaksmi Narayan who was staying at Hajo after his release used to render valuable services to the Imperialists through his relatives and former officers. The position was further consolidated with the arrival of some Hindu officers. The Imperialist then advanced near the fort. Seeing the heavy reinforcement and particularly the presence of native soldiers the Koches evacuated the fort at night.

Thus the Mughals conquered the fort of Pangjuli without fighting after a siege of forty two days. Mirza Nathan admits that during the period of siege, there was practically no supply of food from the seventh day.¹⁸ Apparently, the supply of rations was blocked by the villagers, thereby putting the Imperial army to great strait. Due to this reason, Nathan had to abandon the siege of Pangjuli fort temporarily and the Muhammadan soldiers were engaged in the operations of the villages of Baronti pargana. After suppression of the insurrection of the villages, the Mirza renewed the attack on the Pangjuli fort.

The success of the Mughals was largely due to the assistance of the native soldiers. The name of

¹⁸ Borah, M.I., Op.cit., p.553.

Govind Sardar of Bachachari village deserves special mention in this connection. The Koches on the other hand, did not get any help from the Ahoms. The hill Rajas who offered help seem to have been either half-hearted or not well-prepared to face the enemy. The fact that Chatsa Raja and Rupahar, the brother of Akra Raja acted as spies for the Mughals proves beyond doubt that all the hill Chiefs did not help the Koches. These incidents explain how Mirza Nathan succeeded in suppressing the rebellion through his diplomatic skill.

The half-starved Mughal soldiers now desired rest for sometime in view of prolonged sufferings. The Mirza however, did not consider the time opportune for rest. He wanted that the enemies should be pursued before they could unite their scattered forces. Wasting no time he engaged spies to get information regarding the movement of the enemy. A regiment was also sent to Solmari in aid of Balabhadra Das who was left alone to extirpate Parsuram.¹⁹

Soon after that Chatse Faja and Rupahar brought the secret news that Samuroid was constructing a fort near a mountain pass. M.I. Borah has identified Chatsa Raja with Sat Faja, a Bhutia Chief.²⁰ This is unsupported

¹⁹Borah, M.I., Op.cit., p.553.

²⁰Ibid., p.850.

by local chronicles. It is hard to believe that a Bhutia chief came to Dakhinkol to render help to the Mughals. He was probably a hill Chief, although it is difficult to identify the territories he possessed in view of lack of details in Baharistan-i-Ghaybi.

On receipt of secret information, the Mirza accompanied by a company of Saadat Khan, Mast Ali Beg and Sultan Khan proceeded in search of the enemy and reached the vicinity of the enemy fort near the mountain pass after about five hours journey. The Koch regiment of Samuroid, as reported by the spies was engaged in construction of a fort on the banks of the river Teosila. Raja Bali Narayan also sent troops to his help. They faced the Mughals bravely but were unable to resist for long. Samuroid with his followers retired to an unknown place.

The victory of the Imperialists and the flight of Samuroid and Bali Narayan reacted favourably on the fortunes of the invaders. Akra Raja soon submitted and also promised all help to capture Bali Narayan. Highly pleased, Mirza Nathan said to the Akra Raja - "If you remain firm in your loyalty..... I will make you the Sardar over all the Eighteen hill Rajas, and place you

in the position of Baldev when he is captured.²¹ Assured of such help, he was allowed to depart to his home.

At this stage information reached through Govinda Sardar that Raja Balinarayan had entered the hill region through Barduar. The territory of Barduar was adjacent to Garo Hills and its gateway being 'Barduar' occupied a very strategic position from the geographical point of view. It was found to be the only passage to enter the hill region. As advised by the aforesaid Sardar, a strong force marched to that place to block the passage of Balinarayan and others. The regiment included, besides top Mughal commanders, some Hindu Officers, viz. Bhabani Nay and five other officers of Raja Satrajit's force and Govinda Sardar, the torch bearer of the expedition.²² But Balinarayan in the mean time left the place.

The Imperialists then marched to the place of Bamun Raja in search of the Koch King. The Mirza sent a message to Bamun Raja demanding of him to handover Balinarayan immediately. But before any action could be taken, the Koch Raja fled to the territory of Konwal Raja. Both these Rajas were related to Koch Raja.²³ Led by Gobinda Sardar, the Imperialists pursued Balinarayan and they intersected him. After a short skirmish

²¹Borah, M.I., Op.cit., p.559.

²²Ibid., p.560.

²³Sharma, Benudhar, Op.cit., p.18.

he ran to a high hill nearby. Some members of his family were captured.²⁴

Emboldened with victory, the Imperialists resumed their march to their camp at Barhanti. Meanwhile, Samuroid, presumably to secure the safety of his master opposed the enemy. He was again defeated after a short encounter and then took to his heels.²⁵

The Mughal Commander was however, baffled having failed to capture Raja Bali Narayan and his Chief Commander Samuroid. He also realised that the hill chiefs were putting barrier to his mission. All throughout the expedition they were giving shelter to the rebels. Nevertheless he was confident of his victory and had come to recognise the military weakness of the rebel chief. As a first step he asked them all to submit. Bamun Raja and Konwal Raja who had already came into contact with the Mughals submitted out of fear. Their territories were overrun by the invaders resulting in heavy losses.²⁶ They were followed by Raja Bhu Sing and his brother Mar Singh. Then under the direction of the Koch sardar Gobinda, the Imperialist constructed a big fort in the territory of

²⁴Borah, M.I., Op.cit., p.565.

²⁵Ibid., p.566.

²⁶Ibid.

Bhu Singh. About four thousand Koch paiks were engaged in this job. Raja Kuk and the Raja of Hengrabari followed suit for the safety of their lives.

Failure to capture the Koch Raja and weary of the struggle, the Mirza wanted rest for sometime. He was however, confident of victory. Many hill chiefs by that time had submitted. At this stage the affairs of Solmari engaged his attention. He abandoned the plan to capture the Koch Raja for the time being. An Afghan regiment was despatched under the command of Habib Khan to the help of Diwan Bhagaban Das who was left at Sambhur to deal with the Pabha Chief Parsuram. The expedition brought victory and the lord of Solmari was captured. Thus hunted from rock to rock by his implacable enemy Parsuram fell fighting gallantly.²⁷

The capture of Parsuram was, nodoubt an event of great magnitude. It was a step forward towards achieving a more important goal. He now engaged himself once more with fresh vigour in the pursuit of Raja Bali Narayan and Sanuroid. As a first step he charged the Akra Raja who had promised loyalty earlier, with treason by not seizing the belongings of Bali Narayan which were in the custody of Raja Umed. A regiment was sent to

²⁷Borah, M.I., Op.cit., p.569.

capture these Rajas. Hearing this news Umed Raja fled away but Akra Raja and his brother were brought in chains. This incident produced panic among all the hill Rajas and some of them viz; Dal-Dalapati, Makoto Laskar and the Dakuhs came and submitted.²⁸ In the absence of reliable records, it is difficult to accept the view that all the hill Rajas submitted to the Mughals as narrated in Baharistan. Be that as it may, after a few days all the hill Rajas and chiefs save the Raja of Barduwar who were in the custody of the Mughals fled away to Ranihat.*

The successive assaults on the chiefs of Pakhinkol and the seizure of their territories had a unifying effect on these rulers. Inspired by the spirit of patriotism, they now prepared for a combined effort and rallied round the Koch King to fight back the invaders. At Ranihat they raised a strong fort. At the initial stage, they repulsed all the attacks of the enemy. The Koch Raja realised the futility of the past attempts and so he appealed to the Raja of Assam thus - "If you help us, we shall bar Mirza Nathan's progress towards the Kingdom of Assam; otherwise, if he becomes victorious over us

*About 32 K.M. to the south west of Guwahati.

²⁸Borah, M.I., Op.cit., p.570.

this year, nothing will prevent him from destroying Assam next year."²⁹ The Assam Raja who had been watching the development so long readily welcomed the proposal. The narrative of Nathan further says that the Raja of Assam sent Hati Barua, the chief of his Sardars with a force of eighty thousand men to the aid of the hill Pajas and the Rajkhowa and the Khargharis. Bhukan were attached to his company. Bali Narayan and Samurois who had gone to the Assam Raja seeking help also accompanied the force.³⁰

King Pratap Singha sent Lobo Barua Langi Jhoypuria Kalia Paidingia Barua, Langi Sang with a strong army against the Imperialists.³¹ Hostilities with the Mughals were thus renewed after a lapse of nearly one and half years (September, 1619 A.D.).

It seems unlikely that the Assam Raja could send a force of eighty thousand men as narrated by Nathan. But the force was definitely strong enough to frighten the enemy. The Assam Raja took advantage of the situation and decided to have another trial of strength with the Mussalmans. The theatre of struggle now centred round the fort of Ranihat and Minori.

²⁹Borah, M.I., Op.cit., p.571.; Bhattacharya, S.N., Mughal North East Frontier Policy, p.212.

³⁰Borah, M.I., Op.cit., p.542.

³¹Barua, G.C., Ahom Buranji, p.95.; Gait, E.A., A History of Assam, p.113.

The allies hastened the construction of forts near the main fort of Panihat. While the Mughals were opposing the enemy near the village Kamargaon under the leadership of Govind Sardar, he was stabbed to death by one Sanatan, presumably a Koch. Jadu Mayak (Pai) who was fighting so long with the Koches cut-off the head of Govinda and fled to the hills.³² This was a shocking news to the Mirza in view of the fact that Govind had played a vital role in the Mughal campaigns. But his name will go down in the history of Assam as a traitor who had betrayed his motherland at a critical time.

The seize of Panihat fort continued for long. According to A.C. Ray it continued for four months (May to September 1619 A.D.).³³ Gait says that the two armies faced each other for six weeks (September, 1619 A.D.). It appears from the accounts of Nathan that the struggle was a prolonged one. A series of battles took place. At the initial stage the Imperialists won victories. Many forts of the hill Rajas were destroyed.³⁴

Later the allied armies changed their war strategy. They took to plundering raids and also blocked the passage of supply of rations to the enemy. To counteract the

³²Borah, M.I., Op.cit., p.573.

³³Foy, A.C., History of Bengal, p.158. ; Bhattacharya, S.N., Mughal North East Frontier Policy, p.219.

³⁴Borah, M.I., Op.cit., p.578.

enemy designs, Nathan mobilized a strong garrison at Haligaon in the Pargana of Pandu. Thus securing the supply of rations, he raised another fort at Garal on the bank of the Brahmaputra and placed it under the command of Darwish Bahadur. Meanwhile, Mamu Govind, accompanied by four thousand paiks marched to attack the fort of Haligaon. A great battle took place. Arrows were showered like hailstorm from within the enemy fort. Many soldiers on both sides were wounded and killed. The Mughals ultimately became victorious.³⁵ Thereupon Mamu and the Assamese soldiers retreated.

Mirza Nathan says that the Raja of Assam centured his officers for this defeat and sent two hundred 'Hangdan-dharas'* with the following order 'whoever falls back this time from the battle will be cut into two at the waist by the 'hangdan-dharas'.³⁶ The local Buranjis are silent on this point. It is true that Pratap Singha maintained his authority with a firm hand and he had shown severity on many occasions in punishing the nobles and even his nearest relations on mere suspicion. So who-so-ever was found neglecting his duty or incurring displeasure was severely dealt with. Hearing the news of this defeat at Haligaon Pratap Singha might have warned

³⁵Borah, M.I., Op.cit., p.583.

* Hangdan-dharas - Assamese Swardmen.

³⁶Borah, M.I., Op.cit., p.585.

the Assamese officers engaged for this task and asked them to be audacious.

The Assamese and their allies now quickly and dexterously fortified their position at Panihat. Meanwhile, Lambadar, son of Raja Madhusudan came from Hajo with a strong force to join the Imperialists. Almost scenes of battle another Koch regiment consisting of forty horsemen and three hundred infantry arrived under orders of Lakshmi Narayan.³⁷

Benudhar Sharma believes that Mirza Nathan first constructed a fort near the Mailota hills* in order to invade the territory of Rani Raja. Subsequently he erected two other forts, one at Minori (Maniari) and the other at Haligaon.³⁸ The Mughals used to supply rations to these forts from their main garrison at Garal, on the bank of the Brahmaputra. This observation is in conformity with the narrative of Mirza Nathan. The modern town of Mirza is believed to have been named after him.

With the arrival of heavy reinforcement of the Koch regiment under Lambodar, son of Raja Madhusudan, the Mirza get a new lease of life. Lakshminarayan was in constant touch with the Mughal forces from his headquarters at Hajo. Fierce fighting took place. The

³⁷ Sharma, Benudhar, Dakhinkol - Souvenir of the Assam Sahitya Sabha, Palasbari Ditiye Kasare, p. 16.

* Mailota - Mirza Hill.

³⁸ Ibid.

Assamese regiment was led by the Rajkhowa. They surrounded three forts of the Mussalmans like the prey in a ring-hunt.³⁹ A great calamity befell the Imperialists. From hour to hour the Assamese became more and more aggressive and gunpowder, bullets and cannons of Mirza's army ran short. At his distress, the Mughal commander asked his men to swear in the name of God to fight till the last. But they failed to stand for long. Many Mahammedan Soldiers performed 'jawhar' out of fear. The Mirza and his men then evacuated the fort for safety but were hotly pursued by the Assamese.⁴⁰ Throughout the whole journey of retreat to Malikuti, the Mirza along with a handful of Afgan soldiers went on fighting bravely. But still the enemies were following them like ants and locusts. The Mirza with few survivors escaped to Sualkuchi by crossing the river Brahmaputra downstream.⁴¹ The vanity of the Ahom King was gratified and the Imperial hold in Takhinkol was for a time lost.

According to Ahom Buranji - the Assamese seized two brass cannon, eight large cannons, twenty seven handguns, twenty flint guns, a mehenga, seven swords besides many horses and buffaloes and other booties. The Ahom

³⁹ Borah, M.I., Op.cit, p.596.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.599.

⁴¹ Wade, J.P., An Account of Assam, p.288.; Wade, J.P., Ahom Buranji, pp.100-106.; Gait, History of Assam, p.113.; Roy, A.C., History of Bengal, p.161.

officers later presented these booties to swardader
Pratap Singha.⁴²

After victory, Pharmanarayan (Baldev) and the
hill-Chiefs again made their submission to Pratap Singha
(November 1619)⁴³ with rich tribute. The names of the
frontier Rajas have been mentioned in Ahom Buranji.
They are - Man Sing, Gokar Raja, Joy Raja, Ramun Raja,
Barnagaria Raja and Hangrabarie Raja. In the absence,
of details, it is difficult to identify the position
and territories of these Rajas. The Deodhai Asom Buranji
refers the names as follows - Sukula Raja, Subana Raja,
Bakhuna Raja, Sajai Raja, Parduwareiya Raja and Nel Raja
of Hangrabari.

Confident after this victory, Pratap Singha was
said to have endeavoured to induce the Raja of Koch Behar
who was staying at Hajo to make common cause with him
against the Muhammedans. But his overtures were rejected.⁴⁴
Later, at the instance of the Koch Raja, Lakshminarayan,
a peace proposal was initiated through Biru Kaji.

At Sualkuchi, Sheikh Kamal, Raja Madhusudan,
Raja Satrajit, Mirza Salih, Mirza Yusuf and all the

⁴²Barua, G.C., Ahom Buranji, p.105.; Bhuyan, S.K.,
Deodhai Asom Buranji, p.67.;

⁴³Ibid., Gait, History of Assam, p.113; Bhuyan,
S.K., Deodhai Asom Buranji, p.67; Gogoi, P., The Tai and
the Kingdoms, p.371.

⁴⁴Gait, History of Assam, p.113.

mansabdars of Hajo came to see the Mirza and they requested him to come to Hajo for rest. But the Mirza did not think Hajo to be a safe place for him in view of the intrigues of the officers. He had his own reasons to suspect that these officers had been acting in concert against him. After few days he left for Ramdiya.* The women and children of the officers were ordered to go to their main camp at Chandankuth.

An intrepid general as he was, the Mirza could not bear the humiliation and the hardships that the Mughals had suffered at the hands of the Assamese. He was determined to assert his influence and with this end in view, he prepared for a fresh attack. At Ramdiya, he recruited new soldiers and a review of the strength of the army was held.⁴⁵ Sheikh Kamal, the fauzdar was shocked to see the magnitude of the losses that the Imperialists had suffered in the Dakhinkol expedition. So he did not favour a fresh invasion as desired by Nathan. He said "The Dakhinkol has gone out of control, they want that I should loose the Uttarkol as well."⁴⁶ This shows that the relationship between the fauzdar and Mirza Nathan

*He feared that the outbreak of fresh conflict might lead to great disaster resulting in the loss of Uttarkol also. (Ramdiya - about 10 k.m. to south west to Hajo.

⁴⁵Gogoi, F., The Tai and the Tai Kingdoms, p.270.

⁴⁶Borah, M.I., Op.cit., p.606.

continued to be strained and the operations in the Dakhinkol were not sincerely supported by the Hajo administration. Apparently the Mughal general was not happy with the half-hearted assistance rendered from Hajo. The fouzdar was shocked to hear about the overthrow of the Mughals from Dakhinkol.

The defeat of the Imperialists definitely lowered the prestige of the Subadar and it thoroughly unnerved him. He also realised that one of the factors responsible for the defeat was lack of co-operation from Shaikh Kamal. Early in 1620 A.D. Qulij Khan was re-appointed Fouzdar of Hajo in place of Kamal, apparently to strengthen the hands of the Imperialists against the native chiefs and the Assamese. Soon Ibrahim Khan instructed the new fouzdar to render all possible help to the Mirza if it was necessary to resume fresh offensive measure. The Subadar wrote another letter of consolation to the Mirza as the latter was found to be much aggrieved after his defeat. The above facts reveal that the Subadar failed to adopt a bold policy and left the decision to be taken independently by Mirza Nathan. He was rather not in favour of resuming another round of hostilities realising the hardship of the Mirza.

With renewed vigour and daring initiative the Mirza departed (November 1619) for the Dakhinkol to

remove the stigma of his last defeat. He reached Nagarbera near the confluence of the rivers Koolsi and the Brahmaputra. The new fouzdar who had returned from Jagighopa to Hajo, met the Mirza in the Brahmaputra but declined to discuss anything in spite of clear orders of the Viceroy. Instead, he asked Mirza Nathan to go to Hajo for the purpose. This action of the fouzdar irritated the Mirza and so he thought it not desirable to go to Hajo at this stage. He refused point-blank to accept the suggestion. Further he made it clear to the fouzdar that if the latter desired, he should send reinforcement from Hajo immediately to the village Jumuria. After this discussion Nathan proceeded to Jumuria with his reorganised force. They were opposed by the army of Jadu Nayak near Dhaknabuyi. Many soldiers of Nathan were wounded, but ultimately Jadu Nayak was defeated.⁴⁷ A local chief named Narahari Barkayeth rendered valuable help to the Imperialist in this battle. While proceeding towards Minori, the Imperial army raided the villages and had seized cattle and other properties of the people. On reaching Minori, they pitched a camp on the plains of the Minori hill.

Meanwhile, after paying tribute to the Ahom monarch, the victorious allied forces encamped at Barak.

⁴⁷Borah, M.I., Op.cit., pp.609-610.

The hill chiefs left for their respective places. They foresaw no further immediate danger from the Mohammedan as almost the entire Imperial force was annihilated at Minori. But soon after the news of fresh invasion the Mohammedans bewildered them all. Wasting no time they marched to Minori. As the old forts were all destroyed in the previous war, Samuroid started erecting new forts near the enemy position. To counteract the enemy design, as a first step he cut down the banks of the hill streams in such a way that within the night all the surrounding areas of the Imperial fort were submerged in water. The Mughals were frightened with panic. The Mirza sent Balabhadra Das to Hajo with the proposal for immediate reinforcement as promised by the fouzdar earlier. Qulij Khan had no other alternative but to seek assistance of the Raja Lakhsminarayan. Accordingly Fam Sing, a cousin of the Raja and the son of his uncle Sarba Gosain and Pashupati, son of Raja Madhusudan were despatched with a regiment of Koch paiks. It may be mentioned that the Koch Raja Lakhsminarayan frequently placed his troops at the disposal of the Mirza, with whom he had intimate relations. While proceeding towards Minori, they were opposed by the Assamese near Garal but the attacks were repulsed.⁴⁸

⁴⁸Bhattacharya, S.N., Mughal North East Frontier Policy, p.160.

It is difficult to agree with Gait that the Mirza took the offensive after receiving reinforcements from Bengal.⁴⁹ As a matter of fact the Mirza had to depend entirely on his new recruits and when this was found inadequate, got the assistance of the Koch soldiers under orders of Raja Lakshminarayan. On many occasions, the Bengal force was found to be short at Hajo and as such the fouzdar failed to supply adequate arms when needed. Most of the Imperial soldiers perished in their first phase of the struggle. The Mughals succeeded in overrunning the hill Rajas and Samuroid only in the second phase of the expedition (January - March 1624) with the help of the native Koch soldiers. It may be a fact that the Mohammedan soldiers who were not accustomed to the climate of Assam had suffered from pestilence and other diseases. For this reason the Bengal government did not want to send sufficient Mohammedan soldiers to the Koch territory.

The narrative of Mirza Nathan mentions that there were some Pathan soldiers in the army of the former Koch King Parikshit. After the conquest of Kamrup these Pathans were engaged in the Dakhinkol expedition. Being experienced in the Koch system of warfare, they contributed much to the victory of the Mughals.

⁴⁹Gait, A History of Assam, p.69.

After reinforcement, the three regiments, one under Pashupati, the second under Ram Sing and the third under the Mirza himself attacked the enemy from three directions. A big battle took place and the Assamese combined armies unsuccessfully offered strong resistance. The dead lay in heaps upon one another. Samuroid, Pati Barua, Rajkhowa, the Khargharia phukan and the "11" Rajas - 'all became wanderers in the desert of vagrancy with the dust of disgrace scattered on their heads'.⁵⁰ Thus the three attempts of the Ahoms at supplanting Mughal authority in Kamrup at last proved abortive.

The Mughal commanders then engaged the captive Assamese paiks to find out the hide-outs of Samuroid in lieu of safety of their lives. An Afghan Officer, Jawahar Khan who previously served under Raja Parikshit and knew Samuroid well, with his clever tactics got at the rebel hero.⁵¹ This brought to an end the struggle of Samuroid, a great patriot and a warrior who relentlessly fought for the freedom of the motherland. The Koch general was given a warm reception when produced before the Mirza like a hero. Benudhar Sharma says that the sons and daughters of Samuroid were taken prisoners.⁵²

⁵⁰Borah, M.I., Op.cit., p.615.

⁵¹Ibid., p.616.

⁵²Sharma Benudhar, Dakhinkol - Souvenir of the Ason Sahitya Sabha - "Palasbarir Patisye Kasare" - Saka, 1982.

There is no evidence in Baharistan to prove that the children of Samuroid were captured. In fact the children and some followers of Samuroid subsequently came and offered their submission as desired by the Mirza who treated them with great generosity.⁵³

The author of Baharistan-i-Ghaybi admits that from the day of the last defeat till the day of this victory, for the period of three months and eighteen days, the Mirza was tying a piece of rag round his head waiting for Divine favours. This shows that the second phase of the struggle till the victory at Minori in Dakhinkol lasted upto March, 1620. The vanquished Assamese force fled to Kajalimukh leaving Samuroid to his fate. The narrative of Nathan testifies to this fact.

In spite of the valuable help rendered by the Koch King Lakhshminarayan the capture of Samuroid was not possible. The treachery of certain Assamese paiks only made it possible for the Mohammedans to capture him. However, the trio of Dakhinkol, viz., Samuroid, Mamu Govinda of Beltola, Parsuram, the lord of Polmar, made the position of the Mughals too hot in the region. The victory at Minori restored the Mughal prestige.

⁵³ Borah, M.I., Cp.cit., p.621.

The capture of Samuroid, the sleepless disturber of Mughal peace, was a great political triumph to the Imperialists. It was a trump card in the hands of Mirza who was now determined to use Samuroid to his best advantage. Instead of inflicting on him indignities and cruelties as a war-prisoner, he accorded him a magnanimous treatment.⁵⁴ Strangely enough Samuroid was no more heard of after he was produced before the viceroy,

The Hill Pajas were the next to be dealt with. The first assault was made on the Panwal Raja. He was easily defeated and fled to the upper hill region. This victory was followed by the invasion of Barduwar whose Raja, after a stiff resistance fled and took shelter in the territory of Raja Khamranga. Mirza Nathan says that the territory of Raja Khamranga was a place of security and none of the Koch Kings could ever conquer it. Apparently, the territory was inaccessible to outsiders.

The Mirza accompanied by the Koch regiments of Pashupati and Ram Sing proceeded with the help of the spies towards the place of Raja Khamranga. Incidentally the Raja came to visit a weekly 'hat' along with his

⁵⁴Bhattacharya, S.N., Mughal North East Frontier Policy, p.223.

queen in a state of intoxication. Both of them were easily captured and brought to their base camp. The Raja after regaining his senses promised to hand over the Hatwa Raja of Barduwar in lieu of his release. This was accepted by the Mirza and some faithful persons were sent to Hatwa Raja asking him to surrender before the Mohammedans. Accordingly they brought the Hatwa Raja of Barduwar from his hiding place within three days. Thereafter Khamranga Raja and his queen were granted leave to depart and presented with robes of honour.⁵⁵ As desired by Nathan, the Raja further instructed all the Rajas of the upper hill region not to give shelter to the Rajas of the Lower hill region (Lamdani). The effect was electrical. One after another, within three days all the Eighteen Hill Rajas tendered their submission. The whole of Dakhinkol was thus wrested from the native chiefs atleast for a temporary period.

It appears, therefore, that the Eighteen Hill Rajas were the chiefs of the Lower hill region. Apart from these chiefs, some more powerful Rajas of the upper hill region seemed to have not taken part in the conflict. They were unaffected completely but most of the chiefs of the Lower hill region fled to the upper hill region for safety.

⁵⁵Borah, M.I., Op.cit., p.629.

In the mean time the four sons and the wife of Samuroid arrived. His eldest son, Bagla was still with Raja Baldev. They were given a warm reception. Samuroid was now enrolled in the circle of the loyal Zaminders and twenty mouzas of Dakhinkol were assigned to him for his maintenance. He was however, placed under surveillance of some trustworthy officers. The Mirza further promised,

"The day when the mohana (confluence) of the Kalong will be occupied you will be set at liberty and will be made the Sardar over all the Eighteen Hill Rajas and all the paiks of the Dakhinkol will be placed under your command, and you will be given a place in the circle of my personal favourites."⁵⁶

It is evident that the Mirza still entertained the idea to conquer the area of the Dakhinkol up to Rajalimukh, the frontier Ahom Chowki. The Mughal eastern frontier region near the State of Hangrabari was in the hands of the Assamese. Mirza Nathan sincerely believed that in doing so, Samuroid would be of much help. On the other hand, considering his courage and determination that Samuroid had displayed in the war, the Mirza thought it prudent to appoint the former as a vassal ruler in the Dakhinkol. The Mughals had the experience of getting help from the vassal Koch King who remained strictly

⁵⁶Borah, N.I., Op.cit., p.621.

loyal to the Empire till his death. This plan was designed to serve two purposes. viz., Samuroio, being the most powerful of all the Chief of Pakhiknol would be able to restore peace and order in the region. Secondly, he would be an effective check to future Ahom invasion in the frontier. The Mirza realised in good time that his position would be insecure in the absence of local Koch help. He had bitter experiences in his campaigns due not only to lack of cooperation but active conspiracy of the Mughal officers of Hajo. His position was definitely vulnerable in the midst of hostile elements in the Mughal camp. The fact remains that it was the native Koch paiks who had served as instruments of success of the Mughals. The Mirza on the advice of Samuroio, sent a strong Koch regiment under the command of Fakir Khan Lody, the Pathan hero, to fortify the frontier at Hangrabari.

The Mughal viceroy of Bengal was happy to receive the news of victory and he sent gifts to the Mirza in his honour with clear instructions to the officers of Hajo not to act anyway without the advice of the Mirza.⁵⁷ Raja Satrajit, Raja Madhusudan, Mirza Yusuf and the Usmani Afghans along with their respective armies went to Ranihat accordingly to see the Mirza

⁵⁷ Borah, M.I., Op.cit., p.621.

and to inform him about the gifts sent by the Subadar. They requested him to come to Pandu to take the gift and thereby to show respect to the Imperial authority. Suspicious of the designs of the Mughal officers, especially of Sheikh Kamal, Qulij Khan and Satrajit, he first hesitated. He had reasons to be suspicious in view of the fact that the gifts of honour could have been brought by the officers to Ranihat. But thinking that the refusal to accept the gift might offend the Subadar, he proceeded leaving the fort under his trusted officer, Saadat Khan. At Pandu he received the robe of honour and other gifts and had friendly interviews with Raja Raghunath and other high officials. They also arranged a war council at Pandu and Nathan was requested to wait for sometime till the arrival of Kamal and Qulij Khan from Hajo.⁵⁸

While Nathan was conferring on with the Mughal officers, the Assamese forces attacked the Hangrakari fort resulting in the loss of the fort and also deaths of seven hundred cavalry and infantry. The Mirza accused both Satrajit and Samuroid for this disaster. But it is doubtful if Samuroid who was under strict guard, sent secret information to the Assamese brethren. Moreover, the time was very short to hatch a conspiracy. It is

⁵⁸Borah, M.I., Op.cit., p.622.

highly probable that the news of the absence of Nathan was sent secretly by Raja Satrajit who was inimical to the Mirza. Further Satrajit got advance information about the arrival of the Mirza at Pandu and as such he despatched the message to the Assamese Chowki at Rajalimukh. Satrajit was not happy with the Mughal victory in the Dakhinkol. He had been maintaining for sometime friendly relations with the Barphukan. A traitor and a diplomat by nature, he found it disadvantageous to fulfil his long cherished evil design after the victory of Nathan.

According to Gait, Mirza Nathan advanced to Pandu but was overwhelmed by the Ahoms in a surprise attack and fled in great disorder to Hajo.⁵⁹ There is no such reference in Baharistan-i-Ghaybi.

The Mirza was shocked to receive the news of the loss of Hangrabari fort. He left next morning to Ranihat apprehending that the Ahoms would next attack Ranihat. All the Imperial Officers at this stage departed from Ranihat with some plan and Nathan was left alone. Although he was keen to lead an attack on the Assamese immediately, he was advised by Raja Madhusudan not to take such a hasty step. After fifteen days' rest at the advice of this Raja, he shifted the camp to village Palidao and

⁵⁹Barua, I. J., Mirza Nathan's Narrative - IASO vol. III - LXVI - 1935-39, p.75.

stayed there for another month. During this short period of stay he tried to assert his position in Dakhinkol and started realising revenue. He believed that a forward policy would demand administrative measures to tighten the grip of Imperial authority. This event was followed by a period of lull till the year 1635 and the Assamese were not involved directly in any conflict with the Mughals.

At this stage Samuroid is said to have written a letter to the Sardars of Assam and sent it through a paik named, Sanaton thus,

"Some of the hours of the night are spent by the Mirza in negligence witnessing the dances of courtezans relying upon my keeping guard at the Chowki. If you lead an attack towards the last part of the night, it is quite possible that you will be able to capture the fort of the Mirza."⁶⁰

The letter was detected by Mirza's men. But as he was under promise of shelter, the Mirza kept him under surveillance.

In the rainy season (May - June, 1620) the Mirza ordered his army to proceed to Sualkuchi, on the north bank of the Brahmaputra and to erect a fort for his entire army. A mansion was also built for the

⁶⁰Borah, M.I., Op.cit., p.626.

residence of the Mirza on the south bank of the Brahmaputra, opposite to the fort of Sualkuchi. He then moved along with his army to the new fort. Raja Madhusudan was granted permission to depart with rites of honour.

As desired by the Subadar, Mirza Nathan, leaving his fort in charge of Diwan Balabhadra Das, proceeded to Jahangirnagar accompanied by the hill chiefs, Samuroid and his family, Parsuram and his son, four sons of Balinarayan, wife and daughter of Mamu Govind. But no sooner the party reached Jahangirnagar than the Subadar left for Tippera for a pleasure trip. The Mirza with the company of captive chiefs went to Tippera by boat and reached Udaypur where they met the Subadar. All of them paid their homage to the Subadar. Highly pleased, the Subadar paid eloquent tributes to the Mirza's loyalty and devotion to duties and recommended his name for promotion to the Imperial court. The Mirza also sent peskash valued at Rs.42,000/- to the Imperial court including two elephants, one for the queen Nur Jahan Begum and the other for the Emperor. Later the rank of the Mirza was raised by the increase of 300 personnel and 150 horses.⁶¹

Before the expedition of the Dakhinkol, the

⁶¹Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., p.227.

Viceroy promised to make Nathan the Jagirdar of that Sarkar in lieu of his services. But immediately after the conquest he was called by the viceroy to go to Jahangirnagar along with the captive chiefs. He was required to stay there for eighteen months as desired by the viceroy. S.N. Bhattacharya stated that the Mirza stayed there for ten months. But during this period the Mirza was engaged to quelling the disturbances in many parts of Bengal Suba including the rebellion of Bahadur Khan Hijliwal, the zamindar of Hijliwal.⁶² The Mirza had to stay against his will and on many occasions he received harsh treatment from the viceroy. He was really fatigued with prolonged war in the Koch territory and Assam.

The narrative of Mirza Nathan, although a very exhaustive account of the expedition, does not give anything about the fate of the captives after they were produced before the Subadar. Probably they were detained at Rajca for some time. The local as well as the Persian chronicles are silent about this incident. The names of the chiefs of the Dakhinkol are not given in any Buranjī. However, some references have been made about the role of the hill chiefs at a much later stage.⁶³

⁶²Borah, M.I., Op.cit., p.632.

⁶³Barua, G.C., Ahom Buranjī, pp.113-114.

It appears that the Mirza's second invasion did not lead to a permanent hold in the Dakhinkol. For sometime (1620-1627) Mamu Govind, the chief of Belitola became the feudatory ruler of the Ahoms in the Kokhar region. Prince Jadu Nayak (Rai) also continued to harass the Mughals for a long time.⁶⁴ It is true that the Ahom King gradually withdrew from the arena of Kamrup politics leaving Palinarayan to his fate.

It may be admitted that neither the Mirza nor the Subadar of Bengal was seriously thinking of the expedition in the Dakhinkol. It was the result of political expediency. The revolt of the chiefs and their activities of sabotage resulting in the stoppage of the supply of rations to Hajo necessitated such intervention. The suppression of the revolt was undoubtedly a gigantic task for the Imperial forces of Kamrup as they were tired of the protracted war. But the Mirza accepted it as a challenge reluctantly and endeavoured sincerely throughout as a loyal mansabdar. Depending much on the Rabha and Koch soldiers, which were recruited locally, he ultimately brought about victory. The fact that the Mirza was again engaged in the suppression of the revolt in different parts of Bengal against his wishes proves beyond doubt that his

⁶⁴Gogoi, P., The Tai and the Tai Kingdoms, p.371.

relations with the Subadar were not cordial. The Subadar released him from Jahangirnagar when trouble broke out in the frontier Koch territory again (September 1621).

The revolt of Dakhinkol, though formidable, failed owing to defective organisation of the rebels. There was absence of a carefully concerted plan or a strong central organisation for guiding the movement. The Assamese help came only at a later stage and despite their early victory, they ultimately lost, owing to their lack of political insight and military strategy. Eventually they withdrew from the arena of Kamrup politics leaving Balinarayan and his allies to their fate. The Imperialists on the other hand, were fortunate enough to secure the services of many Chiefs. Their cause was ably served by the former Koch King Balinarayan. The services rendered by the local people in the Imperial army added further advantage to them. In fact Mirza Nathan's conciliatory policy towards many rebel Chiefs acted favourably on his fortunes. A period of comparative political inactivities on the part of the Mughals thus followed in Kamrup.

Notwithstanding the conquest of Dakhinkol, the Mughals could not exercise their suzerainty effectively.

Three factors were mainly responsible for it. First there was no energetic and sincere officer of the Mirza's calibre to settle the affairs; secondly, the inherent weakness of the Hajo administration and internal dissensions made it almost impracticable to exercise their authority properly; thirdly, due to lack of means of communication the Mughals could not extend their sphere of control in many parts of Dakhinkol.

C H A P T E R - V I

CONSOLIDATION OF IMPERIAL AUTHORITY IN KAMRUH AND THE PEACE OVERTURE

The Mughals enjoyed a brief period of respite before another round of conflict with the Koches broke out in the Khontaghat pargana of Kamrup. It may be stated that elephant catching in the forests of Kamrup formed an important part of business of the Mughals. The local expert elephant catchers were engaged for this job. An Imperial officer, Baqir who was entrusted with the task of this 'kheda' operations, picked up some quarrels with the elephant catchers. Trouble arose when large number of elephant catchers were put to severe punishment by him. The victims then rose in open rebellion killing Baqir and many Mughal soldiers. Probably they were also inspired by the rebellion of the local people in Dakhinkol. The palpable pressure of foreign rule and harassment of the native Koch subjects adversely effected their morale. Gradually the rebels intensified their activities and even occupied Gilah, a stronghold of the Imperialists. The Hajo administration despatched a regiment under Raja Satrajit to put down the insurrection. But the Mughal force was massacred by the rebels.

The Subadar of Bengal was very much disturbed over this critical situation. As the fouzdar of Pajo had sought for heavy reinforcement from Bengal, the Subadar was worried to find out a suitable man to lead the expedition. Once again the Subadar considered Mirza Nathan to be most fitted commander of the new expedition. The Mirza's earlier experiences in Kamrup enabled him to penetrate the weakness of the Koch insurrections. But the Mirza had already expressed his desire for rest in view of his involvement in prolonged wars in Kamrup. Despite his reluctance, the Subadar asked him to proceed to Kamrup to quell the Koch rebellion. Another factor prompted the Subadar to depute Mirza Nathan to Kamrup. He received a number of complaints against the Mirza from many officers of Pajo. Apparently he was not happy to be in the company of this officer at Dacca.

The Imperial force consisting of one hundred and twenty mansabdars, one hundred and forty 'firingis', eight hundred matchlockmen, fifty war boats arrived at Goalpara, on the south bank of the Brahmaputra. The Mughals then launched their attack on the enemy.¹ Later,

¹Borah, M.I., Baharistan-i-Ghaybi, pp.649-650.

another Imperial force under the command of Raja Faghunath and Mirza Baqi also joined.

Having achieved a great victory, the Mirza proceeded to Rangamati to recover the Khontaghat region from the clutches of the rebels. Another contingent of force commanded by Shaikh Kamal marched on to the interior of Dakhinkol as rebellion also spread to this region in the mean time. It is, however, difficult to accept the view of the Baharistan that the Mughals were involved in a war with Assam at this stage.² No reference is available in the local chronicles about such incident.

On reaching Rangamati the Mirza found that the rebels had already fled to Gilah. Later the enemy hide-outs were traced out in a dense forest. The rebels under the command of Bhabachand, a brother of Parikhshit Narayan challenged the enemy. The inexperienced local rebels could not stand for long against the experienced and expert Mughal soldiers which included some Portuguese soldiers also. Once again the weakness of the rebels was exposed and the Mughals took advantage of this position. Bhabachand was driven from pillar to post until he retired to a hilly place, south of the Brahmaputra, named Tukunia.³

²Borah, M.I., Op.cit., p.650.

³Tukunia - There is a village named Tukura near the Tukreswari temple on the top of a hill, by the side of the South Trunk Road, about 15 k.m. north-east of modern Goalpara town. The Hindus worship the Goddess Kamakhya of this temple just as Mother Goddess Kamakhya of the Nilamal Hill. Probably the Mughals pursued the rebels to this part of Koch territory. The village Takura (Tukunia) and the Temple of Tukreswari fall within Habraghat mouza of the Khontaghat pargana.

Having cleared Rangamati and Gitah from the clutches of the Koch rebels, the Mirza marched on to Dakhinkol in search of Bhabachand. At Tura the challenge of Bhabachand was thrown back and finally the handful of Koch army was broken up.⁴ Bhabachand retired to unknown place. The family members of Quliz Khan who were taken prisoner by Bhabachand earlier were released. Mirza Nathan later proceeded to his official residence at Sualkuchi.

The sporadic Koch insurrections, however, continued. The Mughals sent another expedition to crush the fresh rebellion of the Koches led by Prince Gadu Nayak in Dakhinkol. The two forces met near Bokro. The balance of victory was in favour of the Mughals. The Koch prince was wounded and fled away. Further operations were postponed till the next year due to rainy season and the Mirza also left for Sualkuchi.

It may be admitted that Mirza Nathan faced the insurrections of the local chiefs with unflinching courage and unfailing resources. In recognition of his services, the Subadar promoted him in rank and also honoured him with a new title, 'Shitab Khan'. The Pargana of Khantaghat was also assigned to him as iagir.⁵

⁴Borah, M.I., Op.cit., p.662,; Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., p.231.

⁵Borah, M.I., Op.cit., pp.666-667.; Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., p.234.

An uneasy lull prevailed throughout Dakhinkol for a brief period following the defeat of Jadu Nayak.

Disensions occurred again among the Mughal officers at Hajo. At this juncture, Shaikh Kamal died. He was succeeded by Mirza Bahram as the Sardar (fauzdar) of Hajo. Mir Safi was reinstated in the office of the Diwan to administer the revenue affairs.

But all was not well in Dakhinkol. Fresh rebellion under Jadu Nayak, the stubborn leader, broke-out causing concern to the Mughals. The handling of repeated revolts of the native people required all the talents and dexterity of Mirza Nathan. Immediately on the outbreak of the rebellion, the Mirza marched to Bhujmala. He was challenged by Jadu with about 8000 Koch paiks. The Mughal commander was no less determined to bring Jadu to heel and to prevent further rebellion. A terrible battle took place. Jadu was compelled to retreat to the hill side and take shelter in the territory of Raja Nilrangili, the ruler of the fourth series of the hills of the upper hill regions.⁶ Consequently the Mirza won over this hill Raja through his diplomatic skill. The latter offered his submission to the Mughals. Mirza Nathan also promised to make him the chief Raja of all the Rajas of Dakhinkol if he could hand over

⁶Borah, M.I., Op.cit., pp.684-685.

Jadu Nayak and members of his family to the Mughals. Lured by this false promise, Raja Nilrangili later managed to hand over Jadu Nayak to the Mughals.⁷ The five commanders of Jadu were taken prisoner and trampled under the feet of the elephants as ordered by the Mirza. The Koch chief and his associate Manu Daloi and their family members were brought to Sualkuchi. The victory of the Imperialists gave a finishing touch to their earlier victories. Indeed, the Koch hero was trapped and although his military skill was no match to that of the Mirza's, he fought with utmost valour so as to bring about the disposition of the Imperial authority. The capture of Jadu was made possible only with the help of the native subjects of the hill Raja. Mirza Nathan suitably rewarded the officers who were instrumental in capturing the Koch Chief with promotion in their ranks. Manu Daloi obtained his freedom by paying a tribute of Rs.5000/- to the Mughals, yet he remained under surveillance of Habib Khan at the Mughal outpost of Jumuria. Since then no reference has been made in the Baharistan about the fate of Jadu Nayak. This may be due to the fact that the Mirza was required to leave immediately for Bengal to join the rebel prince Shah Jahan.⁸

⁷Borah, M.I., Op.cit., p.685.

⁸Gumruddin, M., 'Life and Times of Prince Nurud Bakhsh', p.4.

Thus came to an end a long era of struggle between the Mughals and the Chiefs of Dakhinkol.

Although Mirza Nathan conquered the whole Dakhinkol it did not lead to establishing a permanent foothold over there. Nor the invasion could give permanent hold against the Assamese.⁹ This was due to two reasons. First, after the departure of the Mirza, there was no energetic and efficient officer in Kamrup to settle the affairs properly. Secondly, the inherent weakness of the Hajo administration due to infighting and dissensions among the officers prevented them from looking into the affairs in Dakhinkol.

S.N. Bhattacharya says,

"The Mughal authority was now firmly established. The Chieftains of upper and lower hill regions were made to feel the weight of Mughal arms and were rendered incapable of swerving from the path of loyalty to the Emperor. The Rajas of lower hill region were tactfully removed from their domains and kept under close surveillance and made to dance attendance at the Vice-regal court."¹⁰

The learned author further says that a liberal policy was followed towards the Rajas of Khamranga and Nilrangili. They were reinstated in their domains after they had acknowledged Imperial vassalage and promised to harbour no rebel any more.¹¹ Be that as it may, evidence suggests

⁹Gogoi, P., The Tai and the Tai Kingdoms, p.371.

¹⁰Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., p.240.

¹¹Ibid.

that the Mirza did not get sufficient time to consolidate his authority in Dakhinkol. Rather, the arrangements made by him proved to be ad hoc nature. Many of the vanquished Chieftains of Dakhinkol were brought to Dacca and compelled to stay there as captives. The hill chiefs acknowledged the Imperial sway only nominally and that too for a short period. It was claimed that never during the remaining period of Jahangir's reign or the long reign of his son, do the historians record any more struggle between the Mughals and the hill chiefs.¹² But the fact was that in the eighth year of Shah Jahan's reign fresh hostilities occurred between the Ahoms and the Mughals. The Ahom King Pratap Singha summoned the hill Chieftains and the latter agreed to fight the Mussalmans back.¹³ The long silence that witnessed following the departure of Mirza Nathan in 1624 till 1635 was not indicative of continued loyalty to the Empire. Absence of hostility did not mean acquiescence. Both the Mughals and the Ahoms remained at peace and some efforts were made towards conclusion of a permanent peace. At a later stage, sometime in 1637, Mirza Siyauddin, who came to the aid of Shussalam, was required to deal with the rebel zamindars of

¹²Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit.,

¹³Gait, E.A., A History of Assam, p.114.

Dakhinkol. The latter subsequently submitted to the Imperial commander.¹⁴ During this period of lull, Raja Balinarayan and Chandranarayan of Karaikari continued to harass the **Mohammedans** in Dakhinkol, primarily on their own account, though very often aided by the Ahom King.¹⁵ It is evident from the Ahom chronicles that the hill Chiefs generally maintained their friendship with the Ahom monarch till the end of the Ahom rule in Assam.¹⁶

Though handicapped by internal dissension, in their official camp at Hajo, the Mughals emerged relatively stronger after the suppression of the revolts in different parts of Kamrup. Mirza Nathan must be given the credit for consolidating the Imperial hold. The success of the Mughals was mainly due to their superiority in arms and military tactics. Compared to them, the local Koch troops, both rank and file and leaders were amateurs. The genius like Samuroid, Jadu Nayak, Parsuram were frustrated by lack of trained soldiers. The efforts ultimately failed. The habit of obedience, the determination to suffer hardships and the

¹⁴Gait, Op.cit., p.117,; Bloekmann - J.A.S.P., 1872, Pt.I.

¹⁵Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., p.240.

¹⁶Rajkumar, S., Nilachal, 1963, 2nd issue - 'Khasi Jayantia Parbatar Uttar Kasariya Raja oru Raja Towali,' pp. 299-302.

inner cohesion provided a moral superior to anything. It was this quality which gave the Mughals their early success. To add to this, the assistance rendered by a number of Koch paiks to the cause of the Mughals weakened the position of the local chiefs. The services of Raja Lakhsminarayan and his Koch troops also contributed much to the success of the Imperialists.

The advent of the rebel prince Shah Jahan in Bengal and the death of Ibrahim Khan in 1624 at the battle of Akbarnagar created confusion not only in Bengal but also in Kamrup. The political situation in the north-east of the Mughal Empire underwent a great change for nearly two years. During the Viceroyalty of Shahmat Khan in Bengal (1626), Balinarayan again came out of his refuge, marched across Dakhinkol and seized Lukiduar (extreme south-west corner of Dakhinkol). Practically the whole of Dakhinkol was overrun by him and the Mughals failed to dislodge him. Taking advantage of the weakness of the Bengal government, the hill chieftains and the Koches in Dakhinkol stopped paying tribute.¹⁷ It also affected the fortunes of the Koch King Lakhsminarayan. Mirza Nathan was recalled by Shah Jahan and he proceeded

¹⁷Roy, A.C., History of Bengal, p.158.

to Bengal along with the Koch Raja and other high officials to support the cause of the rebel prince. Lakshminarayan perhaps desired to try his fortunes in the prevailing confusion in Imperial politics. Since he had been living in semi exile at Hajo, naturally he was willing to return to his Kingdom. But his desires were not fulfilled. Soon after Shah Jahan was defeated and left Bengal. Thus all hopes of the Koch Raja vanished. Lakshminarayan changed his allegiance to Jahangir after the defeat of Shah Jahan (November, 1624). The Koch Raja was required to stay at Hajo till his death in 1627 A.D.¹⁸

Shah Jahan was pleased with the assistance offered by Mirza Nathan and others of Kamrup to the cause of the rebels. In recognition of their services he issued 'farman's to Mirza Bahram, Raja Lakshminarayan and Raja Satrajit thus, "you should not stop beyond the orders and advice of Shitab Khan .. Be up and doing in your work."¹⁹ Later Mirza Bahram, the founder was dismissed at the instance of Shitab Khan. He was succeeded by Zahid Khan.²⁰ Evidently Mirza Nathan enjoyed

¹⁸Gogoi, P., Op.cit., p.355.

¹⁹Borah, M.I., Op.cit., p.703.

²⁰Ibid., p.709.

the patronage of the rebel prince and exercised his influence over the administration at Hajo.

Shah Jahan stayed at Dacca only for seven days and then proceeded to Patna after making necessary arrangement in Bengal and the Koch territory. Shitab Khan joined the rebel prince for the conquest of Patna and subsequently he was appointed the fouzdar at Akbarnagar.²¹ However, loyalties criss-crossed and Dorab Khan, Shah Jahan's appointee in Bengal after the death of Ibrahim Khan, deserted and refused to acknowledge the authority of the rebel prince after his return march from Patna. This frustrated all hopes of the prince and confusion prevailed in the Bengal Suba. Unable to maintain his hold in Bengal, he returned to the Deccan. He was finally pardoned by his father in 1625. The rebellion however, caused much damage to the Empire. The real leader of the Imperial force in suppressing the revolt was Mahabat Khan an Afghan mansabdar. He was promoted to the higher rank and consequently appointed Subadar of Bengal for his conspicuous services to the Empire. Dorab Khan a traitor by nature, was later executed by the Imperialists.²²

²¹Roy, A.C., Op.cit., p.128.

²²Joannes, De Laet, (trans. Holyland), The Empire of the Great Mughals, p.215.

S.N. Bhattacharya states that the death of Jahangir (1627 A.D.) was followed by the end of pacific and non-interfering phase of the Imperial policy in Koch Behar.²³ As a matter of fact, however, there had been sporadic Koch insurrections mainly in Dakhinkol and the Mughals were naturally involved in quelling the disturbances prior to 1623. Nearly for five years proceeding the death of the Emperor, the Mughals followed a passive policy in the north east frontier. The closing years of the reign of Jahangir were marked by weakness and chaos in the Imperial Court. Despite this fact, the Sukadar of Bengal took effective steps to suppress the successive revolts in the Koch territory.

Ever since the conquest of Kamrup, the Mughal administration witnessed frequent quarrels and conspiracies in its own camp. During the period of Shah Jahan's rebellion fresh quarrels broke out. An attempt was made to come to terms with the Ahoms; but the negotiations broke down. The Mughals were, too disorganised to carry on the war effectively and contented themselves with holding Hajo and a few other strongholds.²⁴

²³Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., p.162.

²⁴Gait, A History of Assam, pp.69-70.

B.P.Saksena admits that the political condition of north-east India at that time was by no means free from complications. 'Kamrup was in the nominal charge of the Mughal officer, Shaikh (Mirza) Zahid. No serious trouble occurred in this region for about a decade because of the reluctance of the Ahom King to involve himself in a quarrel with the Mughals by interfering in the politics of Kamrup. Weary of prolonged fighting, the Assamese remained indifferent and rather followed a policy of non-intervention.²⁵

During this period of political turmoil, Satrajit, the Mughal thanadar of Pandu, occupied a very privileged position and unchecked power. He even refused to carry out the Imperial orders. Satrajit even established his position firmly and independently with the help of the Bar Phukan, the Governor of Western Assam.

Mirza Nathan now invested in dignity as Shitah Khan, distinguished himself on many occasions as a devoted officer and a great warrior of the Mughal. He had to leave the Koch territory in the interest of the rebel prince. Apparently, he wanted to cury favour with the

²⁵Saksena, B.P., History of Shah Jahan of Delhi, p.115.

rebel prince for further aggrandisement. After the suppression of the revolt, he was naturally deprived of his share in the administration by the Sukadars of Bengal. It is to the credit of Mirza Nathan that he excelled his contemporary Mughal generals. He conducted the wars at times almost singlehanded and with dogged determination against conspiracies of his own men. His endeavour brought victory and glory to the Empire. Even the Sukadars misunderstood him and put him to difficult situations.

For sometime between 1624 and 1627 Mamu, Kaxine, uncle of Farikhsit and the Chief of Beltola exercised his sway as far as the Koroibari region. Satrajit, the naval commander of Pandu made attempts to dislodge Mamu. But the timely arrival of 2000 Kadis (archers) in aid of Mamu from the Ahoms warded off the danger.²⁶ The relation of Mamu with his Kinsman, Balinarayan became strained when the latter put Madhu Nayak son of Mamu to death for rebellion.²⁷ Mamu then fled to Luki out of fear. Both the Ahoms and Balinarayan failed to bring Mamu back from Luki.²⁸ Probably he was also encouraged by Satrajit and the Bar Phukan not to come as desirous

²⁶Gogoi, P., Op.cit., p.371.

²⁷Bhuyan, S.K., Kamrupar Buranji, p.30.

²⁸Gogoi, P., Op.cit., pp.371-72.

by the Ahoms. These two officers had in the meantime, maintained secret liaison for their selfish gains. Later on, Satrajit sent a messenger to Pratap Singha with the promise to arrest Mamu. The Swargadeo in turn sent three Katakis, viz., Ratna Kandali, Maharkhari and Ekadah to Satrajit with orders of arrest of Mamu. But contrary to all promises, Satrajit, apparently, out of fear of the fouzdar and also the fear of losing the Barphukan's friendship, allowed Mamu to escape to Bengal. This action greatly enraged the Ahom king and he sent orders to the Bar Phukan to capture Satrajit.²⁹ Mamu was also suspected of transmitting the secrets of Assam to the Subadar of Dacca.

Meanwhile, some efforts were made by Pratap Singha towards the restoration of permanent peace in the frontier. He sent one Birina Kataki to Koch Raja Lakshminarayan with a matrimonial proposal.³⁰ The Koch Raja was equally anxious to restore peace in the Koch territory and so he immediately welcomed the proposal. But this did not materialise due to the Koch Raj's sudden death (1627). Subsequently Birukaji, who or

²⁹Gogoi, P., Op.cit., p.372. ; Bhuyan, S.K., Kamrupar Buranji, p.30; Gait, Op.cit., pp.113.114; Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., p.259.

³⁰Barua, G.C., Ahom Buranji, p.112.

earlier occasion, negotiated peace proposals on behalf of the Mughals visited the Ahom court. Birnarayan, son of Lakhsminarayan was not in favour of giving his sister in marriage to Pratap Singha. Birukaji however, expressed his desire to offer his daughter to the Ahom King. Considering it as a good gesture, Pratap Singha sent two letters through Birukaji to Satrajit and Busalan, the fouzdar seeking their points of view. The Mughal officers readily accepted the proposal. Accordingly, Lakshmipuria Birukaji's daughter was offered to the King and the grand daughter Hempuria to the King's son Chao-ngi-Gohain with rich dowries.³¹ To cement the bond of friendship, the fouzdar offered two horses and two attendants, named Kaya and Ashan as dowry to the brides. Raja Satrajit also presented the brides with two horses and other valuable articles including two attendants, named, Ram Khan and Chakravarty. The brides were accompanied by a company of men, both male and female.

The matrimonial relations could not however, bring peace between the two powers. Lakhsminarayan sincerely endeavoured to restore peace and with his

³¹Barua, G.C., Op.cit., p.113.

death all such hopes were shattered. Satrajit, a shrewd politician, had been maintaining friendly relations with the Bar Phukan for some time. He also exercised much influence upon the fouzdar of Hajo. Making his position firm, he was in noway inclined to see any more for peace settlement between the two powerful rivals. He supported the marriage of the Ahom King only to please the latter. Satrajit's subsequent actions against the move for reconciliation prove beyond doubt that he was mainly instrumental in frustrating all attempts in this direction. Had a treaty of peace been concluded at this stage, the course of Assam History could possibly have been different.

Three Assamese traders named Sonari, Narahari and Joyhari in course of their trading activities visited Dacca without the knowledge of their king. They volunteered to help in settling peace with Assam and reported the same to the Subadar of Dacca. The Subadar welcomed the proposal and sent two emissaries, named Hashid Khan and Gopal along with the Assamese traders to Gargaon. They carried with them necessary credentials, plenty of presents and an epistle from

the Nawab addressed to the Ahom King.³² They arrived at Kurua³³ and the report of their arrival was communicated to the Barphukan. The visit of the Mughal mission was not welcomed by Satrajit. His ulterior object was to play-off the Ahoms against the Mughals for personal aggrandisement at Kamrup. He realised that he could continue as a powerful leader only with the friendship of the Barphukan. The latter also enjoyed a comfortable position in view of political tension in the western frontier of Assam. Thus to frustrate the peace mission Satrajit devised a plan to play upon the mind of the Barphukan. He wanted that the Barphukan should either retain his friendship or immediately dismiss the mission. Satrajit ultimately succeeded in dissuading the Barphukan from entertaining the mission lest it should eventually lead to failure of his plans that he had been making with the Barphukan.³⁴ So as advised by Satrajit, the Barphukan sent his brother Lachan Deka and a Sajati to Gargaon only to report to the King a distorted version of the mission. It was made clear by the Barphukan that the mudois had violated the norms of diplomacy and furnished all secret information

³²Gogoi, P., Op.cit., p.373.

³³Kurua, opposite to modern Guwahati on the north Bank of the Brahmaputra.

³⁴Enuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.28.

about Assam to the Subadar of Bengal. The Barphukan further reported that the traders had negotiated the peace proposal without the royal order. On receipt of the report, the King expressed his strong indignation and held the traders responsible for bringing disgrace to him and his kingdom. The King could not tolerate such interference in politics by ordinary traders and remarked that 'he is a trader and should therefore, mind his business of trade alone, why should he bring Bengal ambassadors?' The actions of the traders were thus considered a crime and the three traders were killed under orders of the King. The Mughal mission was sent back without any audience with the King.³⁵

This incident bears testimony to the fact that Satrajit exercised much influence upon the Bar Phukan and all attempts to make peace between the two powers were frustrated by the former. The relations of the three Assamese traders later went to the King and showed him the pearls, gold and other valuable articles brought by the traders and the Nawab's agents for the King. They also reported to the King about the earnest intention of the traders as well as the conspiracy of the Bar Phukan and Satrajit. The action of the Bar Phukan

³⁵Saksena, B.P., Op.cit., p.115; Gait, Op.cit., p.113; Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.28.

now created suspicious in the mind of the King and the King realised that something was wrong with the Barphukan and Satrajit. The Ahom King was now determined to punish Satrajit by having him arrested. But the Barphukan did not take effective step in this regard due to his friendship with Satrajit. The Ahom King advised the Barphukan to capture Satrajit by any means.³⁶ Accordingly the Barphukan arranged a meeting through Bhelai Sajati with Raja Satrajit on the sands of Umananda apparently for mutual friendship. The Ahom officers at Kajalimukh discussed the strategy of the meeting and then proceeded downstream the Brahmaputra with one hundred and five boats and reached Umananda. Satrajit too, came with fifteen boats and a few followers (March/April, 1629).³⁷ The Barphukan was assisted by the Chukans, Rajkhowas and Hazarikas of Kajalimukh. Langi Barphukan and Satrajit cordially received each other by embraces, sat on the same embroidered carpet. Both of them exchanged presents. Satrajit was presented with a gold mahar, one hundred girdles, thirty blankets and seven oxen. Satrajit reciprocated by presenting to the Barphukan, twenty embroidered carpets, sixty pieces of embroidered clothes and twenty pearl wreaths. Although the meeting started

³⁶Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.29.

³⁷Ibid., p.29.

with a cordial atmosphere a suspecting Satrajit was on guard. After a brief exchange of pleasantries, Satrajit left the meeting and dashed to Pajo in safety. Apparently the incident caused much surprise to all. In allowing Satrajit to leave the meeting,³⁸ the Barphukan violated the instructions issued earlier by the King.

The action of the Barphukan raised apprehensions in the Ahom camp. It revealed the fact that the Barphukan had acted under the guidance of Satrajit. It is evident that the Barphukan allowed Satrajit to escape for self-interest. The swargadeo considered it simply a foul play and held Langi Barphukan responsible for it. Langi's previous action of duplicity in the matter of envoys carrying the peace proposal from Dacca also

³⁸ Barua, G.C., *Op.cit.*, p.110; Bhuyan, S.K., *Op.cit.*, p.29; Bhuyan, S.K., *Deodhai Ason Buranji*, p.119; Gait, *Op.cit.*, p.114.

The Kamrupar Buranji and the Deodhai Ason Buranji depict a little different picture in regard to the description of the presents exchanged between the two chiefs. Further, according to these chronicles, Satrajit stayed in the boat and did not join the conference out of fear and apprehension. This view may not be correct considering the elaborate arrangement made as has been depicted in the Ahom Buranji. The views as recorded in the Ahom Buranji may be accepted as correct. In regard to the date of the meeting as mentioned in the Kamrupar Buranji (1620, March) appears to be wrong. The date given in the Ahom Buranji (March/April, 1624) may be accepted. The conference was held after the refusal of the Ahom King to see the Mughal mission sent by Qasim Khan who became the Subedar of Bengal in 1628.

incurred the displeasure of the King. Infact Langi concealed important information and mis-reported the object of the visit of the peace mission at the instance of Satrajit. Pratap Singha was now fully convinced that the Bar Phukan had failed to discharge his duties properly on three occasions. 'Firstly, he failed to arrest Satrajit at Umananda; Secondly, he was instrumental in sending Mamu Govinda to Luma and thirdly, he deliberately misrepresented the fact of the peace mission of Dacca.'³⁹ Hence he punished the Bar Phukan and his associate Parbatia Barua with death by starvation.⁴⁰ Abhoypuria Neog (called also Neog's son) succeeded as Bar Phukan in August, 1631.

The failure to arrest Satrajit led to serious consequences. Within a few years' time the Ahoms were again involved in war. Satrajit, knowing the intention of the Ahom King, became active again in order to take revenge upon the Assamese.

In the absence of a capable ruler in Kamrup, the political situation fully exploited by Satrajit. He seemed to have been in a commanding position in Kamrup

³⁹Gogoi, P., Op.cit., p.375.

⁴⁰Barua, G.C., Op.cit., p.110.; Gait, Op.cit., p.114.

for about ten years (1624-1634) and the Bengal government remained practically inactive as far as the affairs of the north east frontier were concerned. He also managed to get most of the nakhinkol jagirs of Mirza Nathan as well as other retired officers for himself. On the authority of the accounts of a contemporary Jesuit traveller, Stephen Cecelle, S.M. Bhattacharya says that 'Satrajit occupied an exalted position and acquired immense power.' The Raja, through his knowledge and position, stands very high throughout the country as we (the travellers) noted at Azo (Hajo), where the people in the streets sheered him as if he was their sovereign".⁴¹

Due to the indifferent and non-intervention policy of the Empire a period of comparative peace followed for nearly ten years (1624-1634). However, within a few years hostilities were resumed between the Ahoms and the Mughals. They were now drawn into open and direct warfare which dragged on intermittently till 1682.

⁴¹Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., pp.245-246.

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CHAPTER - VII

RENEWAL OF HOSTILITIES
(1629 - 1639)

The diplomatic conference of Umananda was arranged with a view to ensuring the arrest of Raja Satrajit, the Mughal Commander of Pandu. On many occasions he was proved to be a traitor to the Ahoms. For sometime, the Ahom King was waiting to pick up a clue to capture Satrajit. The former was equally conscious not to inflict any damage to the Mughals in view of prevailing peaceful atmosphere in the frontier. Satrajit on his part, knowing his own fault was trying to evade arrest, although outwardly he had no quarrel with the Ahom King. The latter was also well aware that the Barphukan and Raja Satrajit were in good terms and both were enjoying their positions quite comfortably with least care to their respective governments. Under strict royal instructions most of the Ahom nobles stationed in lower Assam attended the Conference along with the Bar Phukan. As invited, Satrajit also attended the conference held on the sands of Umananda, with his followers. Although the conference opened in cordial atmosphere, Satrajit, apprehending his danger, soon left the conference with his followers. The attempt to capture this Mughal commander thus had gone in vain.

For nearly seven years after the failure of the diplomatic conference of Umananda (1629), there was no direct conflict between the two great powers. The provincial government of Bengal remained content with merely retaining their authority in Kamrup. Due to the weakness of the Hajo administration and also in the absence of proper guidance and initiative of the Imperial court, the Mughal Officers of Kamrup were very careful in not giving any offence to their powerful neighbour to prevent open hostility. The extinction of almost all disturbing elements as a result of about fifteen years of war paved the way for a new phase in Ahom-Mughal relations. A Scholar remarks "The numerous Koch adventurers and the Hill-Chiefs of Dakhinkol were now gone, and the deadly pastime must once more be played out by the two parties only."¹

The reign of Shah Jahan marks a new epoch in the Ahom-Mughal politics. A period of comparative peace was followed by a period of informal hostility which ultimately led to a change of Mughal diplomatic policy. Thus a reversion of the policy of status quo to armed hostility followed. The political exigencies necessitated resumption of hostilities between the two powers which continued till

¹Bhattacharya, S.N., Mughal North East Frontier Policy, p.250.

the main issues were fought out by the eighties of the seventeenth century. "While peace, harmony and goodwill marked the Imperial relations with Koch Behar, bitter and undisguised hostility started with Assam within few years of the accession of Shah Jahan."² Balinarayan, son of Lakshminarayan, being an incompetent ruler (1627-1632) continued to pay regular tribute to the viceroy and there was nothing to disturb the peaceful and amicable relations established during the last decade of Jahangir's reign. His successor, Prannarayan (1632-1666) remained loyal till the war of succession (1658) and readily responded to the appeal of Islam Khan, the viceroy to help him in his campaign against Balinarayan and the Assamese.

After having firmly established his position Shah Jahan turned his attention towards the affairs of the north-east frontier of his empire. The resumption of hostilities was not, however, the result of the aggressive Imperialism. The eastern region beyond Bengal rarely engaged his attention "War with Assam was undertaken mainly to protect Kamrup. Had the Ahom King not encouraged Balinarayan and taken up his cause, it is doubtful if so much time and energy would have been wasted by the Mughals in that region."² A great part of

² Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., p.251.

³ Saksena, B.F., History of Shah Jahan of Delhi, p.115.

the origin of the conflict was due to inept handling of the situation by the Hajo administration in the absence of definite diplomatic guidelines either from Dacca or Delhi. The treachery of Raja Satrajit, the most prominent officer of Kamrup next to the fouzdar contributed much to the outbreak of fresh conflict .

During the period from 1624 to 1635, there had been commercial intercourse, at least informally, between the two countries. The traders of both sides, moved freely and exchanged goods with each other. Evidently neither power was seriously thinking in terms of any hostility. The Hajo Administration simply carried out the policy initiated and invigorated by the Viceroy based on the traditional forward policy.

An important feature of the history of Kamrup of this period was the treacherous and diabolical activities of Raja Satrajit, the thanadar of Pandu. Energetic, crafty and ambitious, he had taken advantage of the political confusion in Kamrup consequent upon Shah Jahan's rebellion in Bengal with a view to enhancing his power and influence. He became the de facto ruler of Kamrup for nearly a decade and dominated the Ahom-Mughal scene to his best advantage. Anxious to consolidate his authority even at the cost of loyalty to the Emperor,

he entered into secret friendship with the Bar Phukan of Assam and had succeeded in frustrating attempts at peace made by Qasim Khan. As far as Satrajit still continued his crafty ways and was instrumental in bringing about the protracted conflict.⁴

On the authority of the Padishahnama a scholar says,

"two factors, both political appear to have been responsible for fresh struggle. The first was the asylum given by the Ahom king to Santosh Laskar and Jairam Laskar, the chiefs of the paiks of Kamrup, who had sought his protection, being sick of the Mughal viceroy in the reign of Shah Jahan."⁵

The two Mughal officers - Santosh Laskar and Jairam Laskar, took shelter in the Ahom territory shortly after the conquest of the Koch Kingdom during the Viceroyalty of Qasim Khan (1613-1618), the successor of Islam Khan. Apparently the observation is wrong as it relates to earlier times.

Harikesh Chowdhury, a defaulting revenue officer of Kamrup, evading payment of revenue of about Rs. five hundred and Gabharu Ray, another Chief fled to the Ahom territory. Abusalam, the fouzdar of Hajo, demanded from the Bar Phukan the extradition of Harikesh. The Ahom king refused to hand him over on the plea that Harikesh

⁴ Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., p.260.

⁵ Ibid.

was a fugitive. According to Ahom policy a fugitive should be given shelter. Pratap Singha further raised the question of release of Manu Govinda, a vassal chief of the Ahoms who had earlier taken refuge in the Mughal territory. He was not handed over to the Ahoms as demanded, at the instance of Satrajit⁶. Thereupon, Ahom King seized the wife and children of Manu and carried them off to Jakhali as a retaliatory measure. Another source of conflict was that a watch dog (dog) of the Mughal camp strayed into the Assamese domain but was not released by the Ahom frontier officials. This infuriated the Mughals. As a retaliatory step they captured three Assamese subjects from near the Asurar Ali and had tortured them.⁷ Thus complaints and counter complaints were lodged from both sides.

Satrajit, the troublesome Thanadar of Pandu lodged complaints with the Ahom King to the effect that the Assamese with the support of the men of Kamrup (Dhekari) were found killing the Mussalmans in the frontier. The Ahom King pleaded ignorance of the incident. Ever since his escape from the Umananda conference Satrajit was trying to create troubles. His intention was to provoke the Ahoms. Thus his relations

⁶Gait, A History of Assam, p.262; Bhuyan, S.K., Kamrupar Buranji, p.30.

⁷Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.34.

with the King of Assam continued to be bitter. S.N. Bhattacharya blames the Ahom monarch 'for his arrogant and haughty attitude and his flagrant and persistent breach of the ordinary canons of inter-state relations and diplomacy.'⁸ He further says that the series of provocations thus offered by the Ahom King coupled with the aggression of Balinarayan compelled the Mughals to launch fresh warfare. But this view cannot be accepted straightway. The Mughals were also to a great extent responsible for offering provocations as evident from the records of the local chronicles. Raja Satrajit nodoubt played a dirty game in creating bitter feelings between these two powers contrary to what Gait wrote. It is also doubtful, if Satrajit made common cause with Balinarayan and encouraged the latter to push forward his boundary in the Dakhinkol on the occasion of the appointment of Islam Khan as the viceroy of Bengal.⁹ This observation is based on the Padishahnama, apparently surmicing that Satrajit had been doing a lot of mischief for quite a long time in collaboration with some Ahom officials. There is however, no such record in the local Buranjis in support of this view. Probably Balinarayan did it at his own initiative without the instigation of Satrajit. The fact that to

⁸ Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., pp. 262-263.

⁹ Gait, Op.cit., p.114.

conduct of Satrajit was known best to Balinarayan serves to disprove^{that} the latter had acted on the advice of Satrajit.

On the refusal of the King of Assam to release Harikesh, the Mughals sent a force under Shaikh Jami and Mamud to seize him in the Assam territory. This led to inevitable clashes which lasted for nearly four years (1635-1638). The Mohammedan force was opposed by the Ahoms led by Kalansu Sandikoi near Bharali river (1635).¹⁰ Pratap Singha was now determined to carry the war into the enemy's territory. As ordered by the King, the Bar Phukan invited all the frontier Rajas and the Chiefs (Hill Rajas) to Kajalimukh for a war council. Besides Dharmanarayan, the prominent among those who assembled there were, the Rajas of Dimarua, Barduwar, Falchihari and Kajai Raja, Bamun Raja, Gukar Raja, Raja Mansing and Raja Pupsing. They were offered ceremonial presents and then asked to proceed against the Mohammedans in the Company of the Ahom force.¹¹ This incident amply proves that the Ahom monarch still exercised great influence upon these frontier and Hill Rajas as a sovereign ruler.

¹⁰Gait, Op.cit., p.114; Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.14. Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., p.263.

P. Gogoi has wrongly mentioned the name of the river as Barlia, which was well within the Mughal territory, pp. 374 - The Tai and the Tai Kingdoms.

¹¹Barua, G.C., Ahom Buranji, p.113; Gait, Op.cit., p.114.; Rajkumar, S. Nilachal - 1963 - 2nd issue, pp.299-302 "Khasia Jaintiya Parbatar Uttar Kasariya Raja aru Raja Powali."

In March, 1636, the Ahom combined force led by Khangla Chetia, Harideka Laskar, the Dihingia Hazarika Saikon Hazarika marched to Dakhinkol and easily reduced the Mughal forts at Deomiha, Bantikot, Chamarla and Nagarbera. The victors then encamped at Faringa, on the bank of the river Koolsi for rest. The Imperialists lost many soldiers, including a general, besides great quantity of arms and ammunitions.¹² Many fled to Uttarkol. The Imperial army included some Rajputs and Bengal Zamindars, viz. Hariram Rai, Prince Joy Singha and others. Hariram Rai was killed in the encounter. Joy Singha and Shaik Farid were taken to custody (September, 1636).¹³

After the conquest of Dakhinkol, the Ahoms invaded Saraighat. The Mughals tried hard to defend their out posts at Aswakranta, Saraighat and Pandu which were properly guarded by Biram Khan, Khosla Beg and Yar Kuli respectively. Satrajit was in-charge of the fleet. The Ahoms advanced gradually and erected new forts near Pandu and Saraighat. Soon the Pandu fort was conquered by the Ahoms under the command of Dharmanarayan and Khangla Chetia. The Mughals returned to Agiathuti, Satrajit too, fled from Pandu to Agiathuti.¹⁴ The fall of Pandu was

¹²Gait, Op.cit., p.115., Bhattacharya, S.K., Op.cit., p.263, Bhuyan, S.K., Kamrupar Buranji, r.34.

¹³Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.35.

¹⁴Ibid., p.35. Bhuyan, S.K., Deodhai Ason Buranji, p.23.

mainly due to the treachery of Satrajit, who fled without giving any resistance.¹⁵

At this stage, seekers for peace went forth to the Ahom king at the instance of Satrajit. The Ahom Buranji alone records that Satrajit and the Nawab (fouzdar) having had a consultation, sent envoys to the Neco's son (Bar Phukan) who in turn sent them to Gargaon. The Katakis (envoys) thus reported, "We have been sent here to tell you to put a stop to the war by making peace and then open 'hats' and 'phats!' ¹⁶ The same chronicle further records that the Ahom King agreed to the proposal and a peace treaty was concluded temporarily. J.P. Wade, however, expresses the view that the Swargadeo, convinced of the treacherous designs of Satrajit, induced the Bar Phukan to carry on the war with redoubled vigour.¹⁷ Assuming that the peace proposals were initiated by the Mughals, in view of their serious losses and also lack of adequate preparations, it seems very unlikely that a peace treaty was really concluded. Knowing as he did the evil designs of Satrajit, the Ahom king rejected the proposal in all probability. Moreover, if there had been such a treaty, the details of the conditions would have

¹⁵Blochmann, J.A.S.B., 1872, Part I.; Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., p.266.

¹⁶Barua, G.C., Op.cit., p.116.

¹⁷Wade, J.P., An Account of Assam, p.192.

been recorded. The fact remains that Satrajit, notorious for his machinations was alarmed at the loss of the Imperial out-posts and also escalation of the war on a large scale which might lead to the total overthrow of the Mughals from the Koch territory. The series of reverses definitely created panic in the Mughal camp. Another reason was that the Imperialists wanted time in order to make preparations. The position being very much unfavourable, they wanted to stop hostilities. The subsequent counter-invasion of the Mughals after the reinforcements from Bengal proves this fact. According to Ahom diplomatic principles, the vanquished enemy should be dealt with severely and on no account peace should be concluded.¹⁸ It is, therefore, quite probable that the King of Assam rejected the peace offer.

Meanwhile, Abu Salam, the fouzdar sent urgent message to Islam Khan, the Subedar, who sent one thousand matchlock men under Jainal Abedin, together with two hundred war sloops and a large amount of ammunitions and money.¹⁹ The Imperialists strengthened by the reinforcements the Imperialists prepared for the counter-invasion. Abu Salam remained at Hajo and Jainal Abedin was sent to Pandu. Hostilities were thus renewed at Agiathuti,

¹⁸Goswami, S.C., Nitilatankur, p.12.

¹⁹Gait, Op.cit., p.115.

Saraighat and Pandu. It was also decided that Fajluddin, the brother of Abu Salam and Fazil Beg, an Officer of Islam Khan were to garrison the thana and Fajluddin should push his ships as far as Saraighat in order to keep the Ahoms at bay.²⁰ A severe engagement followed near Pandu and ultimately the Assamese were dislodged from the camp with the loss of ships and cannons. Fajl Abedin then quickly marched to Saraighat. The Bar Phukan who commanded the Ahom troops was shot whilst trying to rally his men.²¹ The Mughals advanced to Agiathuti and laid siege to the fort. The Ahoms then retreated to Saraighat which was later besieged by the enemies. For three days the Ahoms kept the Mohammedans at bay, but with the arrival of reinforcement, the latter renewed the attack. The Ahoms were running short of ammunition and were forced to retreat after a hard fight for one month.²²

At this critical juncture Lamnakharu was appointed the Bar Phukan as advised by the Phukans and Rajkhowas.²³ Pratap Singha immediately sent strong reinforcements as soon as he came to know of the reverses. The new Bar Phukan was accordingly made the Commander-in-Chief

²⁰Gait, Op.cit., p.115.; Blochmann, J.A.S.B. 1871, Part I, Bhuyan, S.K., Kamrupar Buranji, p.35.

²¹Blochmann, JASB, 1872, Part-I; Gogoi, P., The Tai and the Tai Kingdoms, p.375.

²²Barua, G.C., Op.cit., p.117, Gait, Op.cit., p.115. Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., p.266.

²³Barua, G.C., Op.cit., p.118.; Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., pp.267-268.

of the Assamese force. Lacham Barua also accompanied the troops as naval commander. In a bloody battle at Majuli (Charland) on the Brahmaputra between Barua and Hajo a great number of soldiers fell dead on both sides. Kalansu Sandikoi died fighting. The Ahoms once more advanced and drove the Mohammedan fleet back to Sualkuchi.²⁴

Meanwhile, the branch of the Brahmaputra flowing by the side of Hajo dried up which prevented the Mughals from moving their fleet to attack. The Ahom Buranji records that a firingi (European), in the services of the Mohammedans, while trying to shoot a vulture, was captured by the Assamese at Sualkuchi. One Laiphrang-jang brought the 'firingi' later to Gargaon and produced him before the King.²⁵ The Mughal fleet still remained at Sualkuchi in-charge of Mohammad Salih Fambu, Majlis Biyajid and Satrajit. No sooner had Jainal Abedin left for Hajo than the Ahoms with nearly five hundred ships attacked the Imperial fleet and gained a decisive victory at the island of the Brahmaputra (Majuli). The Mohammedans were completely routed.²⁶ Several ships, three hundred guns and one hundred sixty swords, besides

²⁴Barua, G.C., Op.cit., p.118; Wade J.P., Op.cit., p.296; Gait, Op.cit., p.116.

²⁵Gogoi, P., Op.cit., p.375. According to him the name of the new Par Phukan was 'Lan-Mong-Shen'.

²⁶Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., p.268; Gait, Op.cit., p.116; Barua, G.C., Op.cit., p.118; Sharma, Penudhar, Durbin, p.14.

large amount booties were seized by the Assamese.²⁷ Satrajit took the first opportunity to retire with his ships and several others followed him in panic. Many were killed including Mohammad Salih; Majlis Tiyaajid was made prisoner.²⁸ The author of Radishahnama blames Satrajit for this disaster. He was accused of having informed the Ahoms of the departure of many Imperial officers from Sualkuchi.²⁹ His flight from the battle field also proves beyond doubt that he had acted with evil motive.

The next move of the Assamese was the invasion of Hajo. As a first step, all supplies of rations were cut off. The troops were led by the Par Thukan, Pharna narayan and Tangsu Sandikoi.

The seize of Hajo continued for eighteen hours and the Imperialists were put to great straits (November 1636). Abu Salam was wounded and agreed to surrender along with his brother. Many Mussalman soldiers were starved to death due to non-availability of rations. Many more Mughal officers, viz. Mirza Baki, Mirza Hussain Shah, Fazil Beg, Ranchan submitted to the Par Thukan and the later sent to Gargaon (January 1637).³⁰ Final

²⁷Bhuyan, S.K., Kamrupar Puranji, p.36.

²⁸Blochmann, JASB, 1872, Part-I, Wade, J.F., Op.cit., p.296; Gait, Op.cit., p.116.

²⁹Gait, Op.cit., p.116.

³⁰Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., pp.36-37.; Gait, Op.cit., p.116; Gait, JASB - Vol. LXII, Part- 1893, p.297. "The Koch Kings of Kamrupa"; Bhattacharya, S.N., Mughal's North-East Frontier Policy, p.270.

Abbedin with the rest of the garrison refused to give in and went down fighting. The details of the booties were, nine elephants, seven hundred horses, two thousand cannons and guns several hundred swords and huge quantity of precious ornaments. The brick buildings of the Mohammedans were also destroyed.³¹ The captive Mughal officers were later settled at Silpani and other places and given land and slaves while the common soldiers were distributed among the Ahom nobles as slaves.³³

The Ahom King was happy at this victory. In order to bring the war to an end, he despatched a team of officials to Hajo to decide the terms of peace. The Mughals agreed to the peace terms without any condition as there was no alternative for them.³² After restoration of peace, the Bar Phukan and Lachai Parua and some other high officials remained at Hajo. They made immediate arrangements for resettlement of about fifty families of expert weavers from Sualkuchi to Lower Assam, apparently for the economic benefit of the Assamese. The action of the Bar Phukan created bitterness and enmity in the Mughal camp. The captive Mussalman officers who were brought to the capital subsequently reported to the King

³¹Gait, Op.cit., p.116; Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.37
Sharma, Benudhar, Doorbin, pp.14-15.; Barua, G.C., Op.cit., p.120.

³²Gait, Op.cit., p.116.

³³Wade, J.P., Op.cit., pp.297-298.

that the Phukans and Baruas had kept for themselves good quantity of pearls and other valuable articles which were actually meant for the King. It was expected that with these presents, the terms of surrender could be made less stringent to the Imperial officers.³⁴ They further informed the King that the Bar Phukan had taken fifty families of weavers (Tati) from Sualkuchi and settled them in the northern part of his jurisdiction, instead of settling them in upper Assam. They impressed upon the King in such a manner that the latter believed whatever said to be true. Hence without any enquiry what-so-ever, the Barphukan was arrested and put to death (1637).³⁵ Pikchai Chetia was appointed Bar Phukan to succeed Lamnakheru Chetia.

The story about alleged misappropriation of valuable articles by the Bar Phukan and his associates was hidden really in a mystery. The weavers of Sualkuchi were the Mughal Subjects. Evidently the Captive officers were worried over the exodus of expert weavers to the Ahom territory. So they appear to have hatched a plot to take revenge and thus instigated the King to punish

³⁴Gait, Op.cit., p.117.

³⁵Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.37; Gait, Op.cit., p.117; Sharma, Benudhar, Durbin, p.15.

the Ahom officials responsible for the mis-appropriation. Although the captives had no direct access to the King, probably they conveyed their feeling through some Ahom officials. The King imposed exemplary punishment upon the officers without verifying the facts. The action of the King revealed his lack of prudence to have acted on information by vested interests. The incident bears testimony to the fact that the Ahom espionage system failed miserably and innocent officers became victims of suspicion and manipulation.

Consequent upon the submission of the Mughals, many Koch Chiefs of Kamrup made their submission to the Ahom King. Chandranarayan, a son of Parikhshit Narayan with the aid of the Ahoms established himself at Patasilah in Karoibari of the Dakhinkol.³⁶ Thus the prestige of the Mughal Empire reached a low ebb and virtually the administration of Hajo collapsed.

The Subadar of Bengal now made vigorous efforts to retrieve the Imperial prestige. He decided to march in person but unavoidable circumstances prevented him to do so. Nevertheless, he sent his brother-in-law, Miranuddin and Allayar Khan with a strong force to recover.

³⁶Gait, Op.cit., p.117.

Hearing the news of the advance of the Imperial force, Chandranarayan retreated to Solmari without opposing the enemy. With the advance of the Mughals eastward, more and more chiefs of Dakhinkol offered their submission out of fear.

The Imperialists now crossed the Brahmaputra to the north bank and retraced their steps to Dhubri. Satrajit had, in the meantime managed to detain some convoy ships sent by the Viceroy. The Mughal commander having obtained clear proof of the treachery, arrested Satrajit and sent him to Dacca where he was first imprisoned and then executed under orders of the Subadar.³⁷ Satrajit was found guilty of various charges of treason. Thus came the end to a man who had dominated the politics in the eastern frontier for nearly twenty two years. K.L. Barua writes,

"At this distance of time, it seems rather a pity that a man who figured so prominently, was an important Imperialist commander and served in campaign after campaign in places far away from his native home, should have met with such a tragic and ignoble end that there seems to be hardly any doubt that he was a traitor."³⁸

The news of the victory of the Mughals in the Dakhinkol and their advance further to the east reached

³⁷ Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., p.274; Gait, Op.cit., p.117; Blochmann, JASB-1872, Part-I.

³⁸ Barua, K.L., J.A.R.S., Vol. III - XVII - 1935, 1939 'Mirza Nathand's Narrative', p.74.

Gargaon, the Ahom capital. Emboldened with the recent victory at Hajo, the Assamese force marched on with confidence to Jogighopa, on the north bank of the Brahmaputra. The Ahoms then erected two forts, one at Jogighopa and the other at Hirapur, opposite to Jogighopa on the south bank of the Brahmaputra. The Ahom fleet then anchored in the mid-stream between these two forts. The huge Ahom force consisted of twelve thousand infantry and many war-boats and led by the Bar Phukan, Balinarayan, the Borgohain and many other nobles.³⁹ Mir Zianuddin also advanced to the vicinity of Jogighopa and constructed a fort at Madhupur. A terrible battle took place. The Ahoms achieved some success at the initial stage, the ultimate victory was with the Imperialists. In one of the engagements Chandra-narayan was killed.⁴⁰ The Mughals then crossed the river Manas and encamped at Chandankuth for the rainy season when it was difficult to carry out the operations. During this period the Imperial forces were strengthened by addition of new soldiers (paiks) of the local zamindars who had, in the meantime returned to their allegiance to the Empire. A flying column of five thousand soldiers was despatched under the fozdar of Sylhet to eject the Ahoms from the Dakhinkol.⁴¹ Mohammad Zaman, the

³⁹ Blochmann, J.A.S.B. 1872, Pt. I; Bhuya, S.P., Kamrupar Buranji, p.37.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.; Blochmann, Op.cit.

fouzdar accomplished his object easily. He then reached Chandankuth. Thereafter Zaman was sent to Farnagar on the Manas to the assistance of Uttamnarayan, the local Zamindar, where he had been driven out by the Ahoms and the Koches. No sooner had he reached Farnagar than the Mughals retreated to Chothri (Sunari) at the foot of the Bhutan Hills.⁴² Soon afterwards, the Ahoms having received reinforcements constructed forts at Paki, Bomara and Jakhalikhana and slowly advanced to Farnagar where they threw up entrenchments.⁴³ The fort of Kalapani was well protected by nature on the bank of the river Kaldia. Mohammad Zaman, accompanied by Uttamnarayan proceeded towards the enemy camp. At the close of the rainy season, the main body of the Mughals force left Chandankuth to join Mohammad Zaman who had encamped at Bishnupur. Before the arrival of the main force from Chandankuth, the Ahoms made several night attacks on the Mughals and by erecting palisades all around their camp, cut off all the Mughal supplies.⁴⁴ Immediately after the end of the rainy season, the Ahom generals, fortified by reinforcements, were determined to strike at the force of Zaman before the two Imperial

⁴²Gait, Op.cit., p.118.

⁴³Bhuyan, S.K., Kamrupar Buranji, pp.37-38.

⁴⁴Gait, Op.cit., pp.118-119; Blochmann, IASR 1872, Part-I.

forces could unite at Bishnupur. Thus on the night of the 31st of October 1637, a severe engagement took place.⁴⁵ At the initial stage the Mohammedans were defeated and they lost three of their stockades at Jakhalikana, Bhavanipur and Bhataukuchi. But the victories were soon followed by defeats after a very sanguinary encounter in which many soldiers perished on both sides. The Ahoms then retreated first to Pomara and then to Barepaita.⁴⁶ The Ahoms lost most of their stockades. But heavier was the loss in terms of lives and materials. Dhammanarayan and many others fled.

The troops of Mir Zainuddin and Mohammed Khan then united and three weeks later, made an attack from three different directions on the Ahom army at Barepaita (November 1637). The Ahoms were already running short of ammunition. Ultimately they sustained a crushing defeat. A large number of Ahom soldiers were killed and many were made prisoners. Polonga Konwar, Tongsu Saudikoi, Lachan Barua, Salaguri Rajkhowa were captured alive. Polonga Konwar was perhaps the son-in-law of the King who was subsequently executed by the Mughals.⁴⁷

⁴⁵Gait, Op.cit., p.119.

⁴⁶Barua, G.C., Op.cit., p. 122; Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.38.

⁴⁷Blochmann, Op.cit., p.61; Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.39.

The scattered Ahom force fled to Srighat where Pratap Singha was encamping with the fleet.⁴⁸

While the Assamese troops were engaged at Kalapani, the Ahom King received reports of dissensions and scandals in the frontier office at Guwahati. Pikhai Chetia, the Barphukan was reported to be sunk himself into sloth and debauchery. The King sent three katakis, viz; Ratna Kandali, Madhav Kandali and Birina to the Bar Phukan to verify the reports. Accordingly they visited Guwahati but were not well-received by the Bar Phukan. The Katakis further noticed that all was not well in the camp. The Baruas and Phukans were found indulging in intrigues and delinquency. Having received this report, the King was convinced that the Bar Phukan was responsible for his indolence and dereliction of duty. So he was arrested and iron-chains were put round his neck and head for six months. Saru-chakua Borochak succeeded as Bar Phukan.⁴⁹ The new Bar Phukan, however, could not discharge his duties properly because he soon contracted rheumatic pain.

The capture of Barepaita⁵⁰ was followed by the

⁴⁸Gait, Op.cit., p.119.

⁴⁹Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.38; Gogoi, P., Op.cit., p.377.

⁵⁰Barepaita

recovery of Hajo. The Imperialists then advanced to Pandu (December, 1637) to regain their forts at Saraihat and Pandu. They captured the Ahom fort at Saraihat inspite of heavy resistance.⁵¹ The King of Assam despatched Marangikhowa Gohain and Khanoadhara Konwar to the aid of Ahom force. The handful of Ahom soldiers could not resist the enemy attack for long. The forts of Agiathuti and Saraighat were eventually lost. Many war boats and guns fell into the hands of the Mughals. Pandu was also evacuated out of panic and the Ahom garrison retreated to Kaliabar.⁵² Thus the whole of Koch Hajo (Kamrup) was cleared off the Assamese and reannexed to the Mughal Empire. The task of the Imperialists was now practically completed.

A number of factors contributed to the failure of the Assamese forces. They were handicapped by internal dissensions in their official camp at Guwahati. The Bar Phukan upon whom depended much of the success failed to exercise his function effectively. Rather, he remained practically idle and enjoying life mainly in his official residence during those troubled days. So was the case with the nobles stationed at Guwahati. As a result,

⁵¹Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.39; Bhattacharya, S., Op.cit., p.278.

⁵²Barua, G.C., Ahom Purnaji, p.115; Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.39; Gait, Op.cit., p.120; Blochmann, Op.cit., p.120.; Salim, G.H., Riyaz-us-Salatin (trans. Abdus Salam), p.212.

the war strategy could not be effectively conducted. Internal cohesion and proper guidance which are essential parts of a war strategy were very much absent in the Ahom force at this critical time. To meet the challenge of the enemy required all the talents and dexterity of a real general which the Ahoms really lacked during this period of Ahom-Mughal wars. Apparently the Ahoms were not adequately matched by the Mughals' superior strength and military strategy. The Mughals fully exploited the weakness of the Ahoms to their best advantage.

The state of affairs at Guwahati came to the notice of Pratap Singha very late. Although he took steps to revitalise the administration of Guwahati by replacing the Barphukan, it seemed to be half-hearted. Following the arrest of Pikhai, the Bar Phukan, there had been a serious gap of leadership to conduct the war. The next Bar Phukan, Saruchakua Borgohain was found to be quite incapable of handling the affairs due to his ailment. This led to an easy victory to the Mughals.

The series of Mughal victories followed by their rapid advance apparently demoralised the Assamese troops. The Ahoms could not foresee the imminent danger of

Mughal invasion in their own territory. King Pratap Singha was not a statesman of high order. He failed to take decision firmly in his relations with the Mughals. In short the Assamese were completely outweighed in war strategy by the Mughals. The death of a number of nobles at the battle of Barapaita was another serious blow to the Ahoms.

The successive victories of the Imperialists whetted their ambition. They now decided to strike a blow by the invasion of Kajali fort. This fort occupied a strategic position at the confluence of the Jalong river with the Brahmaputra and being surrounded by hills on three sides. It was the impregnable frontier port of the Ahom realm.⁵³ At this stage, Khampat Bargohain, Suklahundu Buragohain and Lako Barpatragohain accompanied by Baruas and Bhukans stationed at Sola marched to Kaliabar for putting up a strong defence. They were then ordered to proceed to Kajalimukh. Meanwhile the Mughals arrived and about to seize the fort. But after reinforcement led by Dimarua Raja and Hari Deka, the Ahoms regained their position and brought the fort under their control.⁵⁴ In spite of clear prohibition

⁵³ Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., p.279.

⁵⁴ Gait, Op.cit., p.120; Barua, G.C., Op.cit., para 124; Gogoi, P., Op.cit., p.378. (The name of the Dimarua Raja has been stated as Barua Konwar).

from the King, the Gohains allowed themselves to be drawn into action resulting in their serious reverses. Probably situation demanded such action. King Pratap Singha considered the time not favourable owing to the inadequacy of Ahom military preparations. A great confusion and panic prevailed in the Ahom Capital. They had already running short of their men and war equipments. At this stage Fikchai Chetia and Monai Tamuli Barbarua who were earlier put into prison were released and reinstated. Under orders of the King they proceeded to Kajalimukh. The battle dragged on for eight days. Ultimately the Ahoms were overthrown. Mondsau Sandikoi fled with severe wounds. The Barbarua had a hair-breadth escape by jumping into the water. A large number of Ahom soldiers were drowned. On the Mughal side, their commander Yarkuli was killed. The victors pursued the remnant Ahom force to Kalidhar.⁵⁵

Pratap Singha was shocked to hear the news of this disaster. He was so much alarmed that he prepared for a plight to the hills and removed his valuables from the capital. But he changed this decision quickly, probably advised by his consellers. So he abandoned

⁵⁶Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., pp.39-40; Gogoi, P., Op.cit., p.378.

his plan to evacuate and decided to put resistance although his incompetence had already been sufficiently indicated. He reproved his nobles for acting in contravention of his order. His autocratic temper made it difficult for him to adjust with the situation at times. However, he asked his officers to proceed to Samdhara immediately and to repair the fort. Under his orders, the Barbarua remained at Kaliabor and Barphukan at Samdhara - (September, 1638).⁵⁶ The captive Mughal soldiers who were captured in the previous battles were ordered to be killed because of their treacherous conduct.

Raja Palinarayan was the only enemy left to be dealt with by the Mughals. He had fled to the hills in the previous battles in Kamrup. He was hotly chased by the Imperialists up to the Singari parbat where he and his two sons were killed in an encounter.⁵⁷ It is strange that there is no reference in the local chronicles to the death of this great patriot who happened to be a close associate and vassal of the Ahom King. S.K. Bhattacharya rightly puts it;

⁵⁶Barua, G.C., Op.cit., p.124; Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit. p.40; Gait, Op.cit., p.120.

⁵⁷Ibid.; Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., p.281; Blochmann, Op.cit., p.62; Saxena, B.P., Op.cit., p.115.

"The death of Palinarayan was an event of signal importance not only in the history of Kamrup but also in that of the Ahom-Mughal politics. It removed the stormy petrel of the waters of Kamrup politics and the brain of the Assamese hostility against the Mughals. His career is a long-drawn tragedy of unrealised ambition and unfulfilled enterprises. From the time he sought refuge with the Ahom King, till his death, he waged on unrelenting war against the Mughals and the history of the north-east frontier for about a quarter of a century really turns round his unwearied and ceaseless hostilities and frantic efforts of the Mughals to counteract them."⁵⁸

Thus came to an end the life of a great hero and patriot. He became an inspiration to many Koch chiefs who also died fighting. The names of Pali Narayan, Samuroid, Saratan, Jadu Nayak, Bhabachand and Parsuram figure in the history of Kamrup for their patriotism and extraordinary valour.

The Mughals now became the undisputed master of Kamrup and a part of lower Assam. Having secured their position firm, they turned their thoughts to enhance the Imperial prestige. Mir Nurullah of Harat was appointed the thanadar with his headquarters at Guwahati.⁵⁹ Thus the headquarters of Kamrup was transferred from Hajo to Guwahati.

Intoxicated with rapid success of their arms, they determined to carry the war into the heart of the

⁵⁸ Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., pp.281-282.

⁵⁹ Gait, Op.cit., p.120.

enemy's territory. This was a great mistake on their part and proved fatal to the Mughals later.

Meanwhile the Assamese concentrated their forces at Samdhara on the bank of the Bharali. Although some feverish attempts were made, they failed to rebuild their old forts and make other preparations for war. Nearly all their war equipments were lost in the recent hostilities. At this critical juncture Mir Zianuddin, accompanied by Prannarayan, the Raja of Koch Behar and son of Lakshminarayan advanced upstream and arrived at Barkaroiyani near Samdhara at the mouth of Bharali. (October 1638).⁶⁰ A great calamity befell the Assamese. The Ahoms who were unprepared for the attack, then resorted to diplomatic tactics and accordingly sent Katakis to the Mughal camp with a peace proposal only to gain time for full preparations. The Katakis were asked about the object of their mission. The Governor said to Mir Zianuddin: "For what purpose you have come to this place? If you have come for the conquest of this land, or for any other purpose, tell us, so that we may report to our King. We are prepared to give whatever you demand."⁶¹ The Katakis further explained

⁶⁰Gait, Op.cit., p.120; Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.40; Barua, G.C., Op.cit., para 124; Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., p.283.

⁶¹Devi, L., Ahom-Tribal Relations, p.262.

to the Mughals about the futility of war. The Nawab declared his readiness to withdraw his forces, if the Ahom monarch would consent to pay a tribute of gold, elephants, agar wood, peeper etc. to the Emperor. Thus the Kataki promised to convey the demand of the Nawab to the Swargadeo. A cessation of hostilities accordingly ensued.⁶² Thereafter Sanaton Kataki was sent again to the Imperial camp as instructed by the nobles. He reported: "It is about six months journey to Gargaon from this place. So please give us time so that I can inform the king and let you know the order of the king."⁶³ The Kataki then, was allowed one and half months time to bring the information from Gargaon. Later the Nawab came to know from the boatman who accompanied the Kataki and subsequently fled to the Nawab that the information given by the Kataki was false. He further disclosed that the policy of the Assamese behind these proceedings was to gain time for preparations for war. Evidently the boatman was bribed by the Mughal spies to get information.

After sometime, the Bar Phukan despatched another Kataki to report to the Nawab that the delay in payment

⁶²Wade, J.P., Op.cit., p.302.

⁶³Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.40; Sharma, Benudhar, Durbin, pp.16-17.

of the tribute was due to long distance and so the Nawab should not get annoyed. But the Mughals had already come to know about the false pretext of the Ahom officers. An infuriated Nawab charged the Katakai with treachery and ordered him to be thrown into the Brahmaputra. The Katakai however, managed to trick the executioners and saved his life.⁶⁴

The Barbarua expressed the strongest indignation at the ill-treatment that Katakai had received. The Ahoms, in the meantime, were fully prepared to face any eventuality. Momai Tamuli Barbarua gave a bold reply to the peremptory demands of the Mughals and refused to make any concessions in their favour. The flame of war soon blazed forth and a great deal of fighting ensued.

After securing heavy reinforcements, the Assamese put up a strong defence from Samdhara in the north to Kaliabar in the south across the Brahmaputra. The Barbarua remained at Kaliabar, the three Cohains at Samdhara and Fikchai Chetia Parphukan took charge of the navy. On the refusal of the Barbarua to pay the promised tribute and knowing the calculated move of the Assamese, the Imperialists first attacked the garrison

⁶⁴Mahe, J.P., Op.cit., p.303; Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.41; Sharma, Benuhar, Durbin, p.19.

at Samdhara. The seize lasted for the whole day (January, 1639). Fortune soon favoured the Assamese. Their grim determination paid dividend. A large number of Mughal soldiers perished. At one stage, the Mughals seeing their hopeless position at Samdhara, turned back to Daimunisila (Silghat) on the south bank of the Brahmaputra. But the Barbarua, supported by the nobles drove them out after a gallant fight. The Mughals then retreated to Guwahati and Kajali fort was reoccupied by the Assamese (February, 1639).⁶⁵

According to Riyaz-us-Salatin, the defeat of the Mughals was due to the absence of the viceroy of Bengal for which the campaign was left incomplete. No reinforcement could be sent from Dacca under such circumstances.⁶⁶ The same view has been offered by S.N. Bhattacharya, on the authority of Alamgirnama.⁶⁷ The Mughal reverses can not be said to be mainly either due to lack of proper guidance from Bengal viceroy or want of adequate military strength. The Mughal force consisted of many able leaders like Allayan Khan, Mir-Ziamuddin, Apamahannan, Mechin Khan, Ispinjar, Mirchand, Faja Prannarayan, Ramchandra

⁶⁵Gait, Op.cit., p.120; Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.41; Saxena, B.P., Op.cit., p.115.

⁶⁶Salim, G.H., Op.cit., p.212.

⁶⁷Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., p.285.

Kaji, Uttamnarayan and many others.⁶⁸ Compared to the Mughals, the Assamese force was smaller. The latter lost a large number of their men and war equipments in the previous engagements. This is evident from the results of the series of battles that the Ahoms fought with the Mughals right from the battle of Jorighopa. It may be a fact that the Mughals did not consider it politically-wise to extend the Imperial territory as far as to Samdhara or Kaliabar. Probably guided by this political insight they ultimately retreated to Guwahati. The Mughals could see the fighting spirit of the Assamese and so apprehended danger of staying in the heart of the enemy's territory. The transfer of the Bengal Subadar at this critical time is also significant. It merely brings to light the fact that the affairs of the north-east never seriously engaged the attention of the Emperor.

The prolonged hostilities exhausted the resources of Assam and the Ahoms were unable to continue the war. The Mughals also weary of fighting were anxious to negotiate peace. Most of the Mughal officers including their general Zianuddin retired from Kamrup leaving Allayar Khan in charge of the Imperial affairs after making necessary arrangements for a lasting peace.

⁶⁸Bhuyan, S.K., Cp.cit., p.41.

The two Assamese generals, the Barbarua and the Bar Phukan were instructed previous to their departure from Gargaon to prepare for lasting peace between the two belligerent nations. Accordingly diplomatic missions were exchanged to settle the terms of the treaty to restore peace and friendship. The Mughals despatched one Kamaljan as envoy to Kajalinukh to report to the Barbarua and the Bar Phukan. The envoy carried a letter from Allayar Khan, the fouzdar addressed to the Ahom Officers which reads thus :

"To

Hon'ble Srijut Barbarua and
Chetia Gohain.

Respectfully beg to wish you all happiness in life. I am sending Kamaljan Ukil (envoy) to His Majesty, the king through you. His Majesty would be pleased to listen from the envoy the object of the mission. I hereby submit before you and desire that trade relations may be established between the two countries." February, 1639.⁶⁹

Accordingly the envoy was sent to Gargaon after necessary recommendations were made by the Barbarua and the Bar Phukan. The envoy made rich presents to the king. The Nawab even threatened the king through the envoy with the execration of mankind in the event of a

⁶⁹Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.42. (Kanrupar pu. injit.

renewal of hostilities. A treaty was thus concluded between the two belligerents (February-March, 1639).⁷⁰ The Barnadi on the north bank of the Brahmaputra and the Asurar Ali on the south bank (near modern Guwahati) were fixed as the boundary of the two countries. Thus the Ahoms for the first time acknowledged formally the Mughal over-lordship in Kamrup and the Mughals acknowledged the independence of the Ahoms. Regular exchange of diplomatic missions was established. The plenipotentiaries engaged in drawing up the terms were Momai Tamuli Barbarua and Nawab Allayar Khan representing the Ahoms and the Mughals respectively. Kamrup was thereafter ruled by Mughal fouzders with their headquarters at Guwahati. Momai Tamuli Barbarua remained at the garrison of Kajali for twelve years to protect the frontier from the Mughal aggressions. The Imperial outpost on the Assam frontier was situated at Rangamati, lying on the road between Dhubri and Bilasipara.⁷¹ To perpetuate the friendship, the Mughals sent Chekneda and Jharkhand as envoys to the Ahom court as a good will mission. The Ahoms also reciprocated their ideas by despatching Kanu Sarma and Sanatan Katakis to the fouzdar.⁷²

⁷⁰Gait, *Op.cit.*, p.121; Bhuyan, S.K., *Atan Buragohain and his Times*, p.9; Bhattacharya, S.N., *Op.cit.*, p.286.

⁷¹Bhuyan, S.K., *Op.cit.*, p.9.

⁷²Bhuyan, S.K., *Kamrupar Buranji*, pp.42-43; Sharma, Benudhar, *Durbin*, p.20.

King Pratap Singha learnt many lessons from the prolonged Ahom-Mughal conflict. He now felt the necessity of revitalising the administration. To cope with the increased volume of work in relation to the foreign powers, he brought some significant changes both in internal and external affairs. The post of Barphukan was created to maintain the diplomatic relations with the foreign powers. Another important post, called the Barbarua was created to act as the head of the secretarial and the judiciary, with the cabinet rank like that of the Barphukan. The paiks were divided into several gradation for civil and military purposes. He introduced the system of registration of the names of the foreigners coming to Assam. A diplomatic intercourse rapidly developed with Dacca as a result of prolonged wars.

The second phase of the Ahom-Mughal wars ended with the treaty of 1639 A.D. For nearly twenty years the Mughals and the Ahoms remained nominally at peace. There had been regular exchange of epistles between these two powers during this period. Hostilities were, however, renewed in 1658 during the reign of Jayadhwaj Singha.

C H A P T E R - V I I I

KAMRUP WRESTED BACK FROM THE MUGHALS

The treaty of 1639 became the pivotal point in the subsequent relations of the Ahoms with the Mughals. For nearly two decades both the powers remained nominally at peace. While the Mughals insisted on the maintenance of the stipulated limits of the border as per the terms of the treaty, the Ahoms constantly aimed at repudiating them.¹ During the War of Succession (1658) in the Empire, the Ahoms took advantage of the general disorder and violated the terms of the treaty by expelling the Mughals from Kamrup. A number of epistles were exchanged during this period dealing mainly with the border disputes, trade rivalry, intrusion of Mughal elephant catchers into the Assam territory, etc.. There had been endless criminations and recriminations between the Mughals and the Assamese on these grounds. 'Thus outwardly this period appeared to be one of peace and amity, but in reality it was a period of prolonged diplomatic war of charges and counter charges between the two powers.'² In spite of

¹Bhuyan, S.K., Atan Buragohain and His Times, p.19.

²Saikia, M., Assam-Muslim Relations and its Cultural Significance, p.115.

some minor incidents, things went on smoothly up to the year 1657. In fact internal problems and weaknesses compelled the belligerents to adopt a pacific policy.

Further, a number of diplomatic missions were exchanged between the two powers. The fouzdar of Guwahati Allayar Khan tried to assert the Imperial influence in the newly conquered territories through friendly relations with Assam. Barring some minor incidents of trade disputes, there is no evidence to show that either of the two powerful neighbours demonstrated its military strength up to 1657. Apparently they were not prepared for a show-down. However, it may be said that it was a period of occasional tension and armed peace.³

Pratap Singha died in 1641 and with his death Assam lost a capable and energetic ruler who could possibly have tried to retrieve the lost fortune. During the short period following the conclusion of peace till his death, Pratap Singha tried to maintain the diplomatic relationship established between the two countries. But his death was followed by a period of internal weakness, marked by conspiracies and intrigues in the Ahom court till the occasion of Sutamla alias Jayachwaj Singha (1648-1669). The son and successor of Pratap Singha

³Roy, A.C., History of Bengal, p.164.

was Surampha (Rhonga Raja). He was immoral and unscrupulous to the backbone and his reign (1641-1644) witnessed court conspiracies and severe cruelties. The same state of affairs continued for some time even after the accession of Jayadhwaj Singha. The situation being such it was not possible on the part of the King of Assam to make preparations for war. The early period of Jayadhwaj Singha's reign was marked by the Naga and Miri raids in the Ahom territory which forced him to involve himself in some military expeditions. Both the Nagas and Miris were later brought to submission. His relation, with the Jaintiya Raja were also strained but soon he succeeded in establishing harmonious relationship with the Jaintiyas. Evidently, the Assam Monarch hardly got time to make war preparations against the Mussalmans. As B.P. Saksena put it, "Henceforth till 1658, the relation remained peaceful, if not cordial. Occasionally there occurred some disputes about the boundary line, trading privileges or the similar affairs, but they never became serious."⁴ In fact, after 1639 little notice was taken of Assam by the Mughal chronicles, and it is too much to presume

⁴Saxena, B.P., 'History of Shah Jahan of Delhi', pp. 115-117.

that a well thought out policy was pursued in the region. The occupation of Kanrup was merely an isolated episode bearing little connection with the general imperialistic policy in the reign of Shah Jahan. He wanted to expand his empire in the north-west and south. Thus it is apparent that after the departure of Islam Khan from Dacca, there was no energetic viceroy to deal effectively with the Assamese. Neither the Emperor nor his Viceroy of Bengal took active interest in the north-east frontier affairs. Prince Shuja, the successor of Islam Khan as Viceroy of Bengal (1639-1657) was a victim of pleasures and luxury which seriously affected his intellect and mental faculties. He remained indifferent to the frontier politics throughout his rule. As a result, the fouzdar of Guwahati maintained the diplomatic relations on his own, based on the traditional Imperial policy. During the period of weaknesses (1641-1646), Nomai Tanuli Barbarua who had his seat shifted to Kajali temporarily was the most powerful noble especially in regard to the maintenance of diplomatic relations with the Mughals.

The diplomatic correspondences (inserted in the Appendix) exchanged between the Ahoms and the Mughals fouzdar ushered in a new era - an era of peace and

friendship in the history of north-east frontier of Mughal India. This era appears to have lasted throughout the remaining period of Shah Jahan's reign. The state of affairs was fully upset by the war of succession which enveloped the political horizon of the Mughal Empire.⁵ The letters despatched by Allayar Khan were addressed to both Parbarua and the Bar Phukan. But on many occasions the name of the Parbarua found more prominent place. The letters generally contained matters relating to trade privileges, maintenance of friendly relations and stipulations on boundary lines.

From the letter number two, it appears that the Mughal envoys returned to Guwahati after staying nearly for four months.⁶ Evidently the envoys stayed in the Ahom court as ambassadors in order to strengthen the diplomatic ties. The Ahom Katakis also reciprocated their feeling through regular visit and stay at the Mughal headquarters. They were duly honoured as state guests.

After return the Mughal envoys reported to their fouzdar about the outcome of the visit as well as the qualities of the Ahom monarch and the Parbarua. They

⁵Bhattacharya, S.N., Mughal's North-East Frontier Policy, p.287.

⁶Bhuyan, S.K., (ed) Kamrupar Buranji, p.44; Goswami, H.C., Purani Asom Buranji, p.133.

compared the King to the God of Gods (Mahadev' and Momai Tanmulī Barbarua to celestial spirit (Nandeswar' who surrounded the deity. The Nawab candidly expressed his conviction of the utter impossibility of conquering Assam during the lives of such extraordinary personages. He also acknowledged their power and declared that the same fortunate hour must have given birth to the King and his minister.⁷

In a letter to the Barbarua (no.3) the Fouzdar complained about the capture of some Mughal subjects along with their articles by the Assamese subjects. The fouzdar acted with restraint and reiterated the friendly relations existing between Assam and the Mughal Empire.⁸ In the subsequent letters of the fouzdar to the Barbarua, the former repeatedly emphasised the need to maintain peace and friendship. He also requested his counterpart to issue instructions to the frontier officials to act with restraint and to stop recurrence of incidents of killing (October, 1643).⁹

In 1641 Allayar Khan demanded the extradition of Chandranarayan, son of Parikhitnarayan who had been given political asylum by the Ahom King. He wrote

⁷Bhuyan, S.K., Kamrupar Buranjī, p.44; Wade, J.L., An Account of Assam (ed) Benudhar Sharma, p.307.

⁸Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.45.

⁹Ibid., p.48.

another letter to the Barbarua expressing his unhappiness over the Assam King's refusal to deliver Chandranarayan to the Imperial authorities.¹⁰

In March, 1644, Allayar Khan lodged complaints to the Barbarua against the Bhutias and the Daflas for killing the Mughal Kheda party inside the Assam territory. The Ahom officials sent a blunt reply stating that they had nothing to do with the activities of these hillmen as they were beyond their control. To retaliate the demand of the Mughals, the Ahoms charged them for undertaking Kheda operations within Assam territory. The Ahoms therefore, refused point-blank to redress the grievances of the Imperialists.¹¹ At a subsequent period the Fouzdar wrote another letter to the Barbarua suggesting a formal trade agreement. This was necessary as the Mughal traders had been carrying on brisk trade in Assam realm as far as Singri, Balipara and Bargaon. The Barbarua was apparently angry and challenged the right of the foreigners to trade without formal permission in the domain of his king. He sternly repudiated the suggestion for trade agreement and rather declared such trade as had been carried on as illegal. Despite this warning of the Barbarua

¹⁰Gogoi, P., The Tai and The Tai Kingdom, pp.393-394; Goswami, H.C., Op.cit., pp.135-136.

¹¹Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., p.290.

such unauthorised actions continued unabated.¹²

Although the treaty of 1639 firmly fixed the territorial limits and emphasised the need for maintaining strictly the treaty obligations, encroachments upon the domain of one another were of frequent occurrence. This was sought to be remedied by diplomatic intervention. An Assamese official accompanied by the Mughal envoys reached the region of the Garo hills (in modern Guwahati). The officer was later sent to Dacca on fabricated charges. The Barbarua demanded repatriation of the officer which, however, was not immediately complied with. Allegations and counter allegations were made by both sides and curiously enough, they pretended ignorance with regard to their own offences and remonstrances apparently bore no fruit.¹³ In 1646, the Barbarua in a letter accused the Mughals of their actions in harbouring Mamu Govind, an underling of the Ahom king, who had fled to Bengal betraying his suzerain.¹⁴ These letters are clear evidences of a state of tension that continued to exist throughout the period of apparent peace.

The observations referred to above are apparently based on the Purani Asom Buranji which mainly emphasises

¹²Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., p.291.

¹³Gogoi, F., Op.cit., p.393; Goswami, H.C., Op.cit., pp.136-137.

¹⁴Gogoi, F., Op.cit., p.394.

two factors, viz., Kheda operations and boundary disputes. The Kamrupar Buranji, however, depicts more elaborately about the epistles, putting more emphasis on the continuance of friendly relations between the two States. There is much difference in regard to chronology between the references made in the Kamrupar Buranji and the views of S.N. Bhattacharya. The records shown in Kamrupar Buranji seem to be more accurate both in respect of chronology and contents of the correspondences. Nevertheless, the fact remains that there had been incidents of violation of treaty stipulation by both sides and the Mughals had a major share in it. The Mughals very often tried to extend their sphere of influence through commercial activities and elephant catching business in the Ahom territory which led to the boundary disputes. 'Their spirit of adventure and cupidity having been roused by the abundance of elephants etc. they would not let slip any occasion to cross the border in the east and move up the Brahmaputra into the heart of the country.'¹⁵ As a result of charges and counter charges, peace gradually receded to the background inspite of exchange of good-will missions. As S.N. Bhattacharya put it 'a major conflict was imminent before the outbreak of the war of Succession' (1658).¹⁶

¹⁵Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., p.294.

¹⁶Ibid.

However, the diplomatic skill and forbearance of the fouzdar as also the spirit of reasonableness, moderation and compromise of the Barbarua avoided an open rupture.

The period from 1639 to 1654 can be called the era of Momai Tamuli Barbarua who determined the foreign policy and refashioned the internal administration. He combined in himself the functions of the Barbarua and the Bar Phukan. The diplomatic correspondences exchanged during this period show that both Momai Tamuli Barbarua and Allayar Khan, the fouzdar were the key persons in Ahom-Mughal diplomatic relations for a period of seven years following the treaty of 1639. Allayar Khan's rule lasted till 1646 and this was followed by a period of almost unrelieved gloom and obscurity till the rule of Mir Lutfulla Shiraji who was the fouzdar during the last days of Shah Jahan. As many as five fouzders ruled in Kamrup during the intervening period from Allayar Khan to Lutfulla Shiraji (1654-1658).¹⁷ All the successors of Allyar Khan carried out the same policy and continued to maintain friendly

¹⁷Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., p.294; Bhuyan, G.V. Kamrupar Buranji, p.50.

The five fouzders are - (1) Nawab Khandari (1646); (2) Mirza Hussain (1647); (3) Sayid Hussain (1648); (4) Sayid Kutub (1649-1651) and (5) Sayid Saleh (1651-1653).

relations with the Assamese. In 1647 a good-will mission was again sent to the Ahom court with rich presents. A year later the fouzdar sent message of congratulation with suitable presents to Swargadeo Jayadhwaj Singha on his ceremonial accessions to the throne.¹⁸

A study of the diplomatic correspondences reveals the fact that the fouzdar was more keen to honour the terms of the treaty of 1639. On many occasions he reported to his Ahom counterpart the incidents of violation of the treaty terms by the Assamese in the way of killing the Mughal subjects. These were however, all stray cases and occurred without the knowledge of the administration. Be that as it may, both the powers almost honestly, endeavoured to honour the treaty terms and thereby to continue their friendship.

Another significant development took place during this period as a result of regular exchange of ideas through diplomatic letters and also through commercial intercourse between the Assamese and the Mughals. The Assamese felt the impact of Islamic culture and Mughal polity in their cultural, social and political life.¹⁹

¹⁸Bhattacharya, S.N., Op.cit., p.295.

¹⁹Saikia, M., Op.cit., p.115.

Mir Lutfulla Shiraji, however adhered more strictly to his predecessors' policy by trying to preserve friendship with Assam. He sent regular diplomatic missions to the Ahom court through the Barbarua in accordance with the policy of reciprocal amity and cordial feeling, until the year 1658. Two Mughal envoys named Muhammad Khan and Pahlan were sent by the fouzdar to Assam.²⁰

Consequent upon the war of succession to the Imperial throne fresh troubles occurred in Koch Bihar and Assam. From Akbar's reign onwards the Koch Kings had been obedient vassals of the Mughal Emperors. They sent embassies and even personally paid their homages to the Imperial throne and also reorganised the limits of the territorial frontier in Bengal. But things took a different turn when in September 1657, Shah Jahan fell ill. It was followed by the quarrels among his four sons concerning the question of succession. The Mughals till then adopted a policy of morbid territorial exploitation at the expense of anarchic and defenceless State of Koch Behar.²¹ Prannarayan, the Raja of Koch Behar taking advantage

²⁰Bhuyan, S.K., Kamrupar Puranji, p.50. The name of the fouzdar is wrongly mentioned as Mir Nathula instead of Mir Lutfulla in the Kamrupar Puranji.

²¹Bhattacharya, Op.cit., p.298.

of the absence of Subadar Shuja from Dacca in the wake of the bloody contest for the throne, asked Durlav narayan, son of Uttamnarayan, the Zamindar of Barnagar to launch a combined effort to regain their lost independence. The proposal was rejected by Durlav-narayan on the plea that 'he was a vassal zamindar and was given 'Fans' with 'Sanads' under proper arrangement. So he would not like to rise against the Padshah.'²² Enraged at the reply of Durlavnarayan, Prannarayan sent Bhabanath Karji in order to arrest the Koch zamindar and his brother Harinarayan. No sooner the Koch troops reached Barnagar than the two brothers fled to Beltola.²³ They were later given shelter by the Ahom King. Soon after in 1657, Prannarayan drove away the Mughal envoy, who had come there to demand the annual tribute. Meanwhile, the troops led by Bhabanath advanced towards Hajo on way to Beltola to capture Durlavnarayan, Mir Lutfulla Shiraji, the fouzdar was alarmed over the rising aggressiveness of the Koch Prince and in helpless condition sent his son, Jharulla to oppose the Koch troops with a small force that was available at his disposal. The bulk of the Imperial army had already been withdrawn by Prince Shuja to Bengal.

²²Barua, G.C., Ahom Buranji, p.157.

²³Dutta, S.K., Asom Buranji, pp.13-14.

Jharulla encamped at Mohkhuti and opposed the Koch troops at Madati. He was however, defeated and forced to retreat to Guwahati.²⁴ The Koch King in the meantime made raids into Khontaghat carrying off a great number of Imperial subjects.²⁵

At this stage Swargadeo Jayadhwaj Singha who was on the alert to take advantage of the fratricidal conflict made a plan to recoperate Guwahati. Hurriedly he constructed two bridges over the river Kalang and ordered the Ahom general to prepare for an attack. Accordingly Tongsu Sandikoi accompanied by a strong force advanced towards Guwahati. The fouzdar attacked from two sides being uncertain about help from Bengal, 'fled to Dacca with the speed of lightening and wind.'²⁶ The Assamese quickly occupied Guwahati without a blow. They seized 140 horses, 40 cannons, 200 matchlocks besides other valuable articles.²⁷ Sengmun Raja Bahur Barphukan and Fikchai Chetia, the ex-Barphukan remained in charge of Guwahati. Tongsu Sandikoi, Jagati Urukan and some other nobles advanced towards Hajo and had encamped on the banks of the river Shesha.²⁸

²⁴Gait, Op.cit., pp.129-130; Dutta, S.K., Op.cit., pp.14-15; Gogoi, P., Op.cit., p.395.

²⁵Blochmann, J.A.S.B. 1872, Pt.I, p.63.

²⁶Sarkar, Sir J.N., History of Aurangzib, vol. III (1972), p.101 (Reproduced from Fathiyah); Gait, E.A., A History of Assam, p.130.; Bhuyan, S.K., Kanrupar Buranji, p.52; The date of the flight was March, 1659 (Saka, 1580, Falguna 15 which appears to be correct.

²⁷Sarkar, Sir J.N., Op.cit., p.101.

²⁸Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.52.

Having heard the news of the occupation of Guwahati by the Assamese, the Koch King Prannarayan proposed through his envoy, Chakrapani an offensive and defensive alliance against their common enemy, the Mughals. The Koch King also suggested a friendly division of the conquests with the Ahom King. The proposal ran thus - "Let Maharaja (Ahom King) take the Dakhinkol, me (Prannarayan) Uttarkol. What can the Bangals (Mughals) do if the people of both the countries offer a joint front at Hatichila."²⁹ J.P. Wade refers to the story of exchange of views through ambassadors between the two Kings in this context. In spite of their attempts for a united effort, no agreement could be arrived at and their relations become rather strained.³⁰ The Ahom King rejected the proposal, apparently elated with his victory at Guwahati. Jayadhwaj Singha remarked - "He (Prannarayan) did not send such a proposal before; the Dhekeri wants now to put salt into the boiled curry."³¹ Thus the Ahoms launched an expedition to Hajo through the Koch territory. It was now the Koches' turn to resist the Ahom invasion. At the initial stage the Ahoms were twice

²⁹ Bhuyan, S.K., Kamrupar Buranji, p.53.
 Hatichala is down Pancharatan on the south bank of the Brahmaputra.

³⁰ Wade, J.P., An Account of Assam, p.317.

³¹ Gogoi, P., Op.cit., p.396.

defeated entailing the death of some Ahom nobles. On the Koch side, Anirudhya, son of Bhabanath Karji died with many others. Unable to stand the offensive the Koches ultimately retreated. They were completely routed at the battles of Madati, Champaguri, Bishnurur etc. Bhabanath Karji and the small scattered troops were driven across the river Sankosh.³² (April, 1659). The frontier outpost on the north of the Brahmaputra was established at Paritola (near Dhubri) Baguli Phukan, Lapeti Phukan and Phul Barua annexed Hatichila and Baritola. In the course of the campaign, Chandranarayan, who was put in charge of the Champaguri fort by the Koch general was killed. Thus the entire western Brahmaputra valley fell into the hands of the Ahoms and their outposts were pushed on to the south as far as Hatichila near Karoibari, distance of five days march from Dacca.³³ Two base camps were also established at Nagarbera and Pancharatna. As Kamrup was a perpetual source of misunderstanding between the Mughals and the Ahoms, its entire inhabitants, excepting the heads of Vaisnava Monasteries and temple survivors were transported to and settled in Eastern Assam. As a consequence thereof,

³² Gait, Op.cit., p.130; Bhuyan, S.K., Kamrupar Buranji, p.53; Sarkar, Sir J.N., Op.cit., p.101; Dutta, S.K., Op.cit., p.16.

³³ Gait, Op.cit., p.130; Sarkar, Sir J.N., Op.cit., p.101.

Kamrup became a deserted wilderness for a year and a half.³⁴ The Ahoms not content with their conquest of the whole of the Brahmaputra valley plundered and laid waste the country, to the south of it, almost as far as Dacca itself.

"The Assamese raised the standard of daring and insurrection, and without contest, they conquered the province of Kamrup, swept it with the broom of plunder, carried by force to their own country all and everything, including the movable and effects of the people, pulled down the edifices, left no traces of futility and reduced the whole province to one plain level ground."³⁵

After evacuation of Guwahati by the Mughals a good amount of valuable properties were seized and kept concealed by some Ahom officials for themselves. Having received secret information from the Bar Phukan that Tongsu Sandikoi, Sadai Deka and Kaupatia were responsible for it, the King charged these officers and brought them to Gargaon where they were put in iron chains. The two Ahom Katakis were also held responsible for not informing the secret news in time about the flight of the Mughals from Guwahati. They were severely punished by the

³⁴ Gait, Op.cit., p.130; Bhuyan, S.K., Atan Pura-gohain and His Times, p.23; Kamrupar Buranjī, p.54.

³⁵ Salim, G.H., Riyaz-us-Salatin (trans. A. Salim), p.223.

extraction of one eye from each person.³⁶

Meanwhile Joynarayan, son of Chandranarayan took shelter in the Ahom Court. He was installed as a vassal King at Vijohnagar after giving a princess in marriage to him (August, 1659). Gandharva narayan, son of Bir-narayan was made the Raja of Beltola by Jayadhwaj Singha. Mahidharnarayan son of Dharmanarayan was also installed Raja of Vishnupur, but he did not long continue there. The bulk of the Ahom force was withdrawn from the frontier due to the severe illness suffered by the soldiers. Taking advantage of the withdrawal of the Ahom force, Bhabanath again tried his luck to regain the lost territories. At this stage Jayanarayan volunteered to bring about a rapprochement between Koch Behar and Assam.³⁷ The Koches and the Ahoms exchanged fire across the Manaha for three days, after which Bhabanath retired to Koch Behar. Tongsu Sandikoi, Lakhtakia Barua, Chirai Bora and Lachan Mooni were later charged by the Swargadeo for their lapses on three occasions; first, they had allowed the Mughal fouzdar of Guwahati to escape although they could have captured him with a little more effort; secondly, that the properties seized by them at Guwahati were not sent to Gargaon and thirdly, they failed to capture Bhabanath Karji. For these offences, Tongsu and his associates

³⁶Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit.

³⁷Gogoi, F., Op.cit., p.397. (Reproduced from Assam Buranji, 1648-1681 A.D. - pp.16-18 (ed) S.K. Datta); S.K. Bhuyan, Kamrupar Buranji, pp.53-54.

were put in chains at Rajahat. Jaynarayan fled out of fear of the Swargadeo (April, 1660).³⁸

After some time news reached Gargaon that Mir Jumla, the viceroy of Bengal was preparing for an invasion of Assam. Consulting his ministers, Jayadhwaj Singha sent two experienced Katakis, Sanatan and Madhavcharan to Dacca ostensibly to renew the old friendship but actually to get first hand information about the plan of the great general to conquer Assam and Koch Behar. The Katakis after offering ceremonial presents explained to the Nawab about the friendship that existed between the two countries after the treaty of 1639 and also the circumstances that led to the occupation of Kamrup. Mir Lutfulla Shiraji, till recently the fouzdar of Guwahati and who had fled to Dacca also admitted that it was due mainly to the invasion of the Koches, that he had to leave Guwahati. The Assamese Katakis were cordially received by the Nawab and were also told about the impending invasion of Mir Jumla.³⁹ The Nawab in reply sent an envoy, Jalal Khan with a letter indicating the proposed plan of conquest of Assam. A scholar expresses the view that the Nawab of Dacca as referred to above, was Saista Khan, the viceroy and maternal uncle of the

³⁸ Bhuyan, S.K., Kamrupar Buranji, p.54.

³⁹ Ibid., p.57.

Emperor.⁴⁰ However, there is no record in any Mughal History to show that Saista Khan was the Viceroy of Bengal before the invasion of Assam by Mir Jumla. It is also difficult to accept the view as recorded in the Kamrupar Buranji that the Barphukan wrote another letter to Saista Khan in February, 1662 (Falgun, Saka, 1583).⁴¹ Probably this letter was written to Pashid Khan, shortly after recovery of Rangamati from the Ahoms. The date and the name of the Nawab appear to be wrongly mentioned in Kamrupar Buranji. The confusion in respect of dates of events as well as the Viceroyalty of Saista Khan appears to be intriguing and hence, the following facts deserve to be considered.

Daud Khan, the Subadar of Bihar, under orders of the Emperor started from Patna as early as 13th May, 1659 against Prince Shuja with a view to assist Mir Jumla. On 11th January 1660 the Imperialists recovered Rajmahal from Shuja after fierce fighting. Preparations to invade the eastern bank of the Ganga where Shuja still remained master started now. A contingent of 2500 Afgans under Dillir Khan had, in the meantime been sent by the Emperor to reinforce the army of Mir Jumla.⁴² Aurangzeb himself marched to Garh Mukteswar on the Ganges

⁴⁰ Gogoi, P., Op.cit., p.399.

⁴¹ Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.60.

⁴² Sarkar, Sir J.N., Op.cit., vol. I & II, pp.595-611.

in November, 1659 in order to be nearer at hand to march to Bengal in case of need. But the danger from Shuja was not serious and the Emperor spent most of his time in hunting. Having heard of the success of Mir Jumla, he returned to the capital in February, 1660.⁴³ In March, 1660 Shuja offered an obstinate resistance at Malda. He fled to Dacca on 12 April, 1660. On the 6th May, Shuja bade farewell and accompanied by his family and a few faithful nobles glided down to Arracan. On the 12th May, he finally left the province which he had ruled for twenty years. Mystery shrouds the end of the ill-fated prince. To remove the uncertainty Aurangzeb desired that Mir Jumla the new Viceroy of Bengal, should lead an army into Arracan. after conquering Assam to recover Shuja's family if possible.⁴⁴ After one year of office of Viceroy of Bengal Mir Jumla was asked to the management of a war against the rich and powerful Raja of Assam. "The Emir (Mir) himself had been long meditating this enterprise, which he hoped, would enable him to carry his arms to the confines of China and to secure to himself immortal fame. Aurangzeb's messenger found him perfectly prepared for the expedition."⁴⁵

Mir Jumla after an interview with Saista Khan

⁴³Sarkar, Sir J.N., Op.cit., Vol. III, p.4.

⁴⁴Ibid., Vol. I & II, pp.595-611.

⁴⁵Constables and Smith - 'Bernier's Travels in the Mughal Empire, 2nd Edn. p.171.

arrived at Dacca.⁴⁶ The Padshah Buranji says that on Aurangzeb's accession to the throne, Nawab Saista Khan came to Jahangirnagar (Dacca) with his five sons, two sons-in-law and some mansabdars. He stayed there for some time and used to sell salt and 'Supari' on a monopoly basis to the Bengal merchants. He accumulated seventeen crores of rupees by bartering a gold mahar with two or three tolas of gold in addition to his other trading articles. He even exercised great influence over the administration of Bengal for which the merchants and many zamindars of Bengal brought charges against him and reported to the Emperor thus - "O 'Padshah Bazarat, Saista Khan has contrived to be as great as you are. He has become the Padshah of Bengal."⁴⁷ Saista Khan was later recalled by the Emperor.

It is thus evident that Saista Khan was not the Viceroy of Bengal prior to Mir Jumla but was a vizier (Nawab) who exercised immense power being the maternal uncle of the Emperor. He was definitely zealous of Mir Jumla's power and position and so secretly informed the King of Assam about the imminent invasion. It is possible that Mir Jumla paid a visit to Saista Khan as

⁴⁶ Bhuyan, S.K., Kamrupar Buranji, p.59.

⁴⁷ Bhuyan, S.K., 'Annals of the Delhi Badshahote (ed), pp.168-169. (Padshah Buranji).

desired by the Emperor before his campaign to Assam and Koch Behar. At the interview with Saista Khan, the great general felt much humiliated for which he is said to have lamented thus - 'The prestige which I managed to acquire during these seventy years of my life has all been burnt to ashes at the hands of Saista Khan.'⁴⁸ The fact remains that by May 1660 Mir Jumla accomplished his objectives with success after nearly one year of struggle with Shuja and then consolidated his position in Bengal. It is, therefore, incorrect to say that Saista Khan was the Viceroy of Bengal prior to May, 1660 and that he made diplomatic correspondences with the Raja of Assam. But taking advantage of the absence of Shuja at the time of the contest with Mir Jumla, Saista Khan might have exercised some control over the provincial administration. On 8th January 1660, Saista Khan started from Aurangabad as Viceroy of the Deccan with a view to exterminate Shivaji.⁴⁹ Sir J.N. Sarkar has not mentioned anything about Saista Khan in connection with the expedition to Bengal. Saista Khan became the Subadar of Bengal in March 1664. It is likely that the officers who were left nominally incharge of the administration at Baceda by Shuja made the diplomatic correspondences with the Ahoms

⁴⁸ Bhuyan, S., Op.cit., pp.146-148.

⁴⁹ Sarkar, Sir J.N., Op.cit., vol. III, p.259.

as they did not like to antagonise the latter at a critical time when fierce fighting was going on between the forces of Shuja and Mir Jumla on the banks of the Ganges. The supporters of Shuja at Dacca wanted the Assamese to prepare themselves for the impending invasion of Mir Jumla. From the envoys report, the Ahom King had nothing to doubt about the inevitability of a big war with the Mughals. Jayadhwaj Singha then had serious consultations with his ministers and other high nobles of the court and started preparing for the war. A fake battle was fought amongst the Ahom officers at Parghat (1660) to the delight of the King and others only to prove the strength of the army.⁵⁰ It was a dress rehearsal for the impending war.

After the expulsion of the Mughals, the whole country of Kamrup from Barnadi to the river Ankosh became a part of the Ahom Kingdom. But the Ahoms could retain their hold for about three years only. The Mughal Emperor Aurangjib, after consolidating his position sent a strong force under Mir Jumla to conquer Assam and the Koch kingdom (November, 1661).

⁵⁰Bhuyan, S.K., Kamrupar Buranji, p.59.

CHAPTER - IX

MIR JUMLA'S INVASION OF ASSAM

Mir Jumla was appointed governor of Bengal in June 1660 by a 'firman' of the Emperor. He was also commissioned to conquer Assam and Arracan after the settlement of the affairs in Bengal to 'punish the lawless zamindars of the province who had caused injury and molestation to the muslims.'¹ With the end of the 'war of Succession', a strong forward policy was adopted by Aurangzeb to assert his influence in the north-east as well as in north-west under the able leadership of his energetic Viceroy. The proposed venture on Assam and Koch Behar was a part of this imperialistic design. Contemporary European travellers have portrayed Mir Jumla's Assam expedition as a 'clever device on the part of the Emperor Aurangzeb to keep his general, of whom he was afraid, usefully employed in the dreadful country of Assam.' Bernier, who travelled in Mughal India during the period from 1656 to 1668 A.D. says - "After subjugation of Bengal Emir Jumla (Mir Jumla) sent an eunuch to Aurang-zebe with a letter, supplicating the King to permit his family to repair to Bengal under the

¹Sarkar, Sir T.N., History of Aurangzib, Vol. II, p.102.

eunuch's care - 'The war is happily at an end'; he said, 'and as I am infeebled and broken down by age, you will not and surely can not refuse me the consolation of passing the remainder of my days with my wife and children. But Aurangzeb penetrated at once into the design of this expert politician, he knew that if his son Mahmet Emir Khan, were permitted to visit Bengal, the father Jemla would aspire to the independent sovereignty of the Kingdom, if indeed such an acquisition would have satisfied the pretensions of that extraordinary man. Aurangzeb acted on this occasion with his native prudence. His wife, and daughter, together with his son's children were sent to Bengal, created him - 'Mir-ul-Omrah' the highest rank that can be conferred upon a favourite, and appointed the son, the 'grand Bakshir', or 'grand master of the horse', rendering it difficult, if not impossible, for him to remain at a distance far from the king's person. Jemla was also confirmed in the government of Bengal. Foiled in his object, the Emir only expressed gratitude to the Emperor".² The primary task of Mir Jumla although, was to capture the fugitive prince from Arracan, the expedition was dropped due to unavoidable reason. The Emperor however, desired that the new Viceroy

²Constables and Smith - 'Bernier's travels in the Mogul Empire' - 2nd edn. (edited), pp.169-171.

after conquering Assam, lead an army into Arracan to recovery Shuja's family if possible and thereby to remove the uncertainty for ever. So, after nearly one year of his stay in Bengal, Mir Jumla was entrusted with the invasion of Assam and Koch Behar, which he was himself seeking to do for long to earn immortal fame.

J.T. Wheeler has expressed the view that Aurangzeb's old friend and supporter 'Amir Jumla' wanted to return from Bengal to Deccan to conquer Bijapur and Golkunda and stamp out Shivaji. But Aurangzeb was jealous of him; he suspected that Amir Jumla wanted to found for himself an independent kingdom in the Deccan. Accordingly he sent Amir Jumla to Assam on a hopeless expedition.³

It is reasonable to believe that Aurangzeb was afraid of the devastating power of the great general who had already won many victories over Aurangzeb's rivals as well as the rebel vassals of the Emperor. Aurangzeb was confident of the victory over the Assamese and that in any case for sometime at least, he would get rid of a powerful and dangerous 'friend', who could, with his extensive resources, assert his independence as Sultan of Bengal. As Assam was then well-known all over Mughal

³Wheeler, J.T., 'India under the Muslim Rule', p.335.

India as a land of witch-craft and pestilential diseases, the old nerves of Mir Jumla, thought the Governor, were sure to be affected by its climate.⁴ Saista Khan, the vizier and maternal uncle of Aurangzeb was also jealous of Mir Jumla. Saista Khan told Mir Jumla that he had no bread in this country unless he earned it by the conquest of Assam. So long Mir Jumla had to settle the internal revolts without making any new annexations to the empire. Naturally he sought the opportunity to utilise his experiences to crush the enemies on the eastern frontier and then to fulfil his ambitious design of carrying his victorious arms to the mountainous steppes of China.⁵

Jagadishnarayan Sarkar aptly says that there were cogent reasons for Mir Jumla to take the decisions. "The Governor of Bengal he must chastise the contumacious rulers of Koch Behar and Assam in the interest of maintaining imperial prestige and securing safety of the imperial dominions."⁶ The extension of the Ahom kingdom up to Baritola and Hatishila and the revolt of Prannarayan necessitated intervention by the viceroy both in Assam and Koch Behar. So political exigencies coupled with a strong desire to assert the imperial influence

⁴Bhuyan, S.K., 'Atan Buragohain and His Times', pp. 23-24.

⁵Ibid., p.24.

⁶Sarkar, J.N., Life of Mir Jumla, p.225.

in the north-east under the able leadership of Mir Jumla led to the invasion of Assam. Therefore, there is no reason to believe that Mir Jumla's expedition was purely independent. While Aurangzeb was anxious to keep his great general busy in the remotest part of the country thereby removing all apprehensions to the security of the throne. Mir Jumla thought it as a part of his duty as viceroy of Bengal to regain the lost prestige by crushing the power of the Kings of Assam and Koch Behar. After the conquest of the Mughal territory as far as to the neighbourhood of Dacca, Mir Jumla had occasion to write to the Emperor,

"Assam has occupied Kamrup and is contemplating to invade us. My scheme of subduing the country of the Rags cannot be completed within a short time. So in the meantime I propose to invade Koch Behar and Assam.

Aurangzeb ratified his general's plan.⁷

Jagadishnarayan sarkar further says that the Ahoms had been left unpunished for their pernicious activities on previous occasions like the capture of Sayid Abu Bakr and Abdus Salam in the reign of Jahangir and Shah Jahan respectively. This argument was however, partially true in that there had been a series of wars following the death of Abu Bakr in the battle of Samahra (1616). So the question of retribution as such, after

⁷Bhuyan, S.K., Annals of the Delhi Padshahate, p.23; Sarkar, J.N., Op.cit., pp.225-226.

lapse of about 45 years did not arise. It is true that Mir Jumla was actuated not only by imperialistic design, but also by a desire for a holy war with the infidels of Assam and Koch Behar and an ardent passion for releasing Mussalman prisoners of war and to root out the idolators.⁸ At the initial stage, there had been few cases of plunders and oppression and even destruction of temples. But subsequently he forbade all sorts of oppressions on the people and wanted that his orders to be strictly followed.

Before proceeding to Assam Mir Jumla wanted to conquer Koch Behar and punish Raja Prannarayan who had declared independence causing cruelties to the Mohammedan subjects. Simultaneously he sent two envoys, Halleg and Hariram to the Phukans of Assam at their frontier outposts of Hatishila and Baritola protesting against the occupation of Mughal territory and also demanding withdrawal of Ahom forces.⁹ The Ahom officers despatched the envoys along with the message to the Bar Phukan at Guwahati through the nobles stationed at their base camp at Pancharatna. The Bar Phukan in turn sent the envoys to the Swargadeo with his comments. After eight days

⁸ Sarkar, J.N., Op.cit., p.225.

⁹ Bhuyan, S.K., Kamrupar Buranji, p.59; Godei, P., The Tai and the Tai Kingdoms, p.399; Dutta, P.K., Assam Buranji, p.18.

the King sent a reply to Mir Jumla through Sanatan Katakai who accompanied the Mughal envoys.¹⁰

Prior to this, news reached Gargaon that the Mughals were preparing for the invasion of Assam. Apparently the Ahom king was frightened as he had, in the meantime, come to know about the devastating power of Mir Jumla. He therefore, did not like to incur the displeasure of the Mughal viceroy at that moment and wanted to restore the friendly relations. With this end in view, he replied that he had seized Kamrup to guard it from the Koches and offered to restore it to the Mughals and that he had no conflict with the Mughals what-so-ever. This gesture of Jayadhwaj Singha was nothing but a clever ruse to gain time for completion of the war preparations. According to Asam Buranji the Ahom King refused to hand over Kamrup on the plea that it was conquered from the Koches (Bardewania) and hence Koch Behar should be conquered before Guwahati could be taken.¹¹

Mir Jumla was not pleased with the reply of the Ahom King and he prepared for the war. Rachid Khan was accordingly deputed to take delivery of Kamrup from the Ahoms. But disloyalty of a vassal like Prannandya

¹⁰Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.60; Dutta, S.K., Op.cit. pp.18-19.

¹¹Dutta, S.K., Asam Buranji, p.19.

could not be pardoned. Another force was despatched under Raja Sujan Sing to conquer Koch Behar and punish its King.¹²

Rachid Khan advanced unopposed to Bangarati at the western end of Kamrup. On his approach the Ahoms abandoned Dhubri. Rachid Khan had to halt there before advancing further against the well-equipped Ahoms. Raja Sujan Sing also could not advance beyond Ek Duar, a fortified gateway leading into Koch Behar in view of enemy's superior strength. As reinforcement was necessary Mir Jumla decided to march in person against Koch Behar first.

On the night of 1 November 1661 the viceroy accompanied by Dilir Khan started from Khizrpur with a strong army of 12000 horses, 30,000 foot soldiers and a vast flotilla of war boats numbering atleast 323. Most of the naval officers and sailors were Portuguese with some English and Dutch sailors too. After entering Koch Behar, Mir Jumla ordered Sayid Mohammad Adiq to destroy all the Hindu temples and to erect mosques in their stead. The general himself with a battleaxe broke the image of Lord Krishna. Quoting from Fathiya-i-Ibriya,

¹²Gogoi, R., Op.cit., p.400; Sarkar, Sir E.B., Op.cit., p.102; Gait, E.A., A History of Assam, p.121.

Sir Sankar says that Mir Jumla subsequently issued orders forbidding plunder, rape and oppression of the people. Be that as it may, Mir Jumla destroyed the temples of the Hindus at the initial state of his campaign in Koch Behar in accordance with the prevailing religious laws of the Empire. It is reasonable to believe that due to various handicaps faced by Mir Jumla in the Assam campaign, he forbade the destruction of the temples and all sorts of oppression. The Mughal army reached the capital of Koch Behar on the 19th December. The Raja and the people deserted the place in terror. The name of the capital was changed to Alangirnagar. The whole kingdom thus annexed to the empire. The Raja fled to Bhutan, his eldest son Vishnunarayan joined the enemies, embraced Islam and even offered to arrest his father in the hope of securing the throne.¹³ Bhabanath Karji was arrested and was imprisoned later. After sixteen days' stay in Koch Behar Mir Jumla left a garrison under Isfandiyar Beg and set out to invade Assam on the 4 January 1662 A.D.¹⁴

Meanwhile the Assamese troops having abandoned Hatishila and Paritola encamped at Jogichopa. Puli Bhukan

¹³Sarkar, Sir J.N., Op.cit., p.103; Bhuyan, S.K., Atan Buragohain and His Times, p.74; Gogoi, Op.cit., p.400.

¹⁴Sarkar, Sir J.N. Op.cit., p.104.

now became the Neog Phukan and Commander-in-Chief. A strong fort was also erected on the confluence of the Manas and the Brahmaputra. The fort was about two miles in circumference with strong and thick walls which were mounted with guns.¹⁵ According to some accounts 5000 soldiers assisted by 320 war boats guarded the fort. The fort at Pancharatna on the opposite bank of the Brahmaputra was also strengthened. Phul Barua Phukan and Lahan Phukan defended the fort. Raja Sasur Bar Phukan and Pikchai Chetia remained in charge of the forts of Pandu and Saraighat. The Bar Gohain was put in command of the garrison at the Sandhara fort. The south bank opposite to Sandhara was guarded by the Bura Gohain, Bar Patra Gohain, Namanial Raja Sahur Bar Chetia, Charing Raja, Rup Sandikoi and many other high nobles with Ghora Konwar Phukan as the supreme commander.¹⁶

At this juncture, an unfortunate incident occurred in the Ahom camp resulting defections among the top officials. Manthir Bharali Barua, son of Bezdoloi, a Kayastha by caste was appointed the chief commander of the Ahom army in Lower Assam.¹⁷ The

¹⁵Gogoi, P., Op.cit., p.401.

¹⁶Gogoi, P., Op.cit., pp.401-402; Goswami, H.C., Purani Asom Buranji, p.94; Bhuyan, S.K., Famrupar Buranji, p.62.

¹⁷Gait, E.A., Op.cit., p.133; Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.25; Gogoi, P., Op.cit., p.402.

appointment of a non-Ahom to a high office was against the established practice of the Ahom government. The nobles could not tolerate this appointment. Bharali Barua had already earned a bad name among the Ahoms by inflicting cruel punishment on some officers as head of the military court.¹⁸ Such unprecedented supersession tended to demoralise the officers stationed at Jogighopa (Manahamukh) and Pancharatna. Indignant at the action of their King, they said, "The King has found the Bezdoloi more trustworthy than us - let him fight the Mughals."¹⁹ Thus the aggrieved officers gave up war and withdrew to Pandu without shooting a single bunch of arrows.²⁰

Sir J.N. Sarkar has given a different view of the incident. "The Ahom army devastated by cholera offered a feeble resistance, always retreating before the invaders or being routed with heavy slaughter."²¹ Similar views have also been expressed by Gait. P. Gogoi, on the authority of some Tai Ahom chronicle however, says that when the Mughal invading army was on the advance, cholera broke out in the camp of the Assam army and twelve men died of the diseases in the area. So they returned after very faint hearted resistance.²²

¹⁸Gogoi, P., Op.cit.

¹⁹Gogoi, P., Op.cit., reproduced from Tr. 84 (D.H.A.S) Vol.II, Part I, p.72.

²⁰Gogoi, Op.cit., reproduced from Ahom Buranji, S.M.J.C., p.93.

²¹Sarkar, Sir J.N., Op.cit., p.104.

²²Gogoi, P., Op.cit., p.403.

Mir Jumla now advanced victoriously up to the Brahmaputra carrying all the stockades, one division marched up the south bank of the Brahmaputra and he himself marched with the main body along the north bank.

Meanwhile news of the fall of Jogighopa reached Jayadhwaj Singha. Thereupon he hastily despatched large reinforcements to Saraighat and Pandu; but the Muhemmedans arrived before them.²³ The advance wing of the army under Rachid Khan reached Shahburuj. The Ahom troops on the north bank fled to Kajali. Thus Guwahati was occupied by the invaders on the 4th February, 1662.²⁴ A fort at Beltola also succumbed to a night attack. Mir Jumla passed three nights at Saraighat. The panic-stricken Ahoms then left Kajali and fled to Samdhara. According to Sir J.N. Sarkar the Rajas of Darrang and Dimarua deserted to the Mughals in terror.²⁵ There is some confusion about the name of the Rajas of Darrang as depicted in the Muhammedan chronicles. Gait says, that the name of the Darrang Raja of this period was Suryanarayan, and not Makaradhvaj. A Raja of 'Paní' who lived about this time was named Makaradhvaj and it is possible that it is this chief who is referred to.

²³Gogoi, F., *Op.cit.*, p.403; Gait

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Sarkar, Sir J.N., *Op.cit.*, p.104.

On the other hand, when the next Ahom King came to the throne, it is stated that the Raja of Darrang sent him a message of congratulations and so he restored the friendly relations which had been interrupted during the Muhammedan invasion.²⁶ It is likely that the Darrang Raja did not submit to the Mughals.

Vigorous efforts were now made to arrest the further advance of the Mughals. They started concentrating their forces at the two impregnable forts of Samdhara and Simalugarh, the latter situated on the south bank opposite to Samdhara.²⁷ Jayadvaj Singha was extremely pained to see the mass retreat of his forces. In the face of this great danger he made a new disposition of the generals and the forces as a last measure for the defence of the country. He removed his father-in-law (Raja Sahur) from the office of the Bar Phukan but was asked to help in the south bank.²⁸ The army on the north bank was placed under the command of Banrukia Langichang Bar Gohain. The Tipar Raja, Kanduguria Barpetra Gohain, Baduli Phukan and other officers were posted under him. For the Dakhinkol army, Ghora Knowar was given the supreme command and under

²⁶Gait, Op.cit., pp. 134.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 133, 404.; Bhuyan, S.K. Kamrupar Buranji, p.62.

²⁸Dutta, S.K., Op.cit., p.19; Gogoi, P., Op.cit., p.404; Bhuyan, S.K., Kamrupar Buranji, p.62.

him were, Bahgharia Buragohain, Namaniyal Raja Sahur Barchetia, Rup Sandikoi, Sadiyakhwa Gohain etc..²⁹

An advance post was also established at Gufithura on the north bank under the command of the grand-son of Tamuli Doloi, Lapati Phukan and many others.

Mir Jumla advanced triumphantly along the north bank and half way to Samdhara he crossed the Brahmaputra to the south bank. Meanwhile Raja Sahur, who had been dismissed from his post of Bar Phukan became revengeful and in-cooperation with one Bhotai Deka of Nowgong showed to the enemy the path through Diyu river leading to the plains of central Assam.³⁰

Ghora Konwar Phukan, who was in command of the south bank at his utter distress requested the Bar Gohain at Samdhara to send some of his troops to reinforce the southern army. But the Bor Gohain, still apprehending danger to his own post refused to send his troops.³¹

The advance of the enemy continued unabated and at this time a Muslim naval force reached Pottakalong near the Diyu river, and attacked the Ahom force. After a stubborn resistance for six days, the Ahoms fled to Mula. Lacham Hati Barua, who was in command of the fort at Patta-Kalong fell fighting but his gallantry caused

²⁹Gogoi, P., Op.cit., p.404.

³⁰Gogoi, P., Op.cit., p.405.

³¹Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.62.

amusement of the Mughals.³² (late February, 1662). A large number of elephants, horses and ammunitions were seized by the invaders.

Simultaneously another body of troops under Dilir Khan reached Simalugarh and stormed the fort (25th February).³³ The fall of this impregnable fort was a fatal blow to the defence of the country. The fort occupied a very strategic position. It lay between the Brahmaputra on the north and a range of hills on the south and was protected on the other two sides by walls with battlements on which numerous cannons were mounted. Outside the walls were the newly excavated trenches and pits studded with panjis.³⁴ But in spite of strong fortification and the bravery of their soldiers the Ahoms could not resist the attack for long because of internal dissension and weakness. The Ahoms had really the misfortune to be under inefficient or timid leaders as on some other occasions. Radmeswar Gogoi opines, 'it remains a puzzle why such a strong resistance was not put up.' He however, attributes the main reasons of the 'Mughal victory to the superior skill and generalship of Mir Jumla coupled with his

³²Barua, G.C., Ahom Buranji, p.164; Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.62.

³³Gait, Op.cit., p.134; Sarkar, Sri J.N., Op.cit., p.104.

³⁴Gait, Op.cit.

European Complement of the army, although there had been hostile elements inside the Ahom camp and the conspiracy of Raja Sahur Bar Ihukan.³⁵ According to S.K. Bhuyan the causes of the fall of the garrison were due to an error of judgement on the part of the Commander of the north bank, who failed to despatch reinforcement.³⁶ Mir Jumla himself expressed wonder at the fortification of the place.

The commanders at Samdhara lost heart at the fall of the Simalugrah fort and Banrukia Bar Gohain immediately destroyed the ammunitions stores apprehending serious danger. He evacuated the fort for safety which was quickly followed by Mughal occupation of the fort.³⁷ Mir Jumla placed his own garrison at Samdhara under Kishen Singh and then marched on to Kaliabor. After three days' stay at Kaliabor, the general appointed Sayid Nasuruddin as the fouzdar of Kaliabor.³⁸

From Kaliabor, the Mughal army continued their march towards Gargaon. At this point the country along the bank of the river was very hilly and Mir Jumla had to lead his troops along a mere level road, which lay at some distant island. The fleet thus

³⁵Gogoi, I., Op.cit., p.406.

³⁶Bhuyan, S.K., Atan Buragohain and His Times, p.25.

³⁷Gait, Op.cit., p.135; Sarkar, Sir F.N., Op.cit. p.104.

³⁸Gait, Op.cit., p.135; Gogoi, I., Op.cit., p.406.

became isolated and the Ahoms, seeing their opportunity attacked it with seven or eight hundred ships. On the night of 3 March fierce fighting took place near Kaliabar; but the Mughals gained a signal victory annihilating the enemy's naval power. Though the Assamese made it to attack the Portuguese Sailors, the latter fell upon them with such impetuosity that after a few hours of fighting, the Assamese were vanquished and about three hundred ships were seized.³⁹ This was the first great disaster the Ahom navy had ever suffered in its history and it decided the fate of Assam in her struggle against Mir Jumla.⁴⁰

The victorious march then continued to Salagarh. But the Mughals had to fight hard in many places in order to clear their way to Gargaon. At Salagarh, a few miles above Kaliabar, some Ahom officers appeared with letters from Jayadhvaj Singha asking for peace. The peace overture was rejected by Mir Jumla suspecting the peace move to be a dilatory tactic to gain time for effective resistance.⁴¹ The Ahom officers along with their families evacuated to Sala at the approach of Mir Jumla.

Meanwhile the commander of the north bank after evacuating Sandhara was retreating eastward with his whole

³⁹ Sarkar, Sir J.N., Op.cit., p.104; Gogoi, I. Op.cit., p.407.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Gait, Op.cit., p.136.

army. He also asked the inhabitants to leave their villages with whatever they could carry and destroy the rest of their properties leaving nothing to the Muhammedans in the event of their attempt to follow him. However, the Mughals were not interested with the north bank and Mir Jumla persisted with his determination to advance towards Gargaon. Jayadhvaj Singha was terribly frightened and asked his commanders to concentrate at Lakha at the confluence of the Dihing and the Brahmaputra. But Mir Jumla arrived at Lakhaugarh before the Ahom forces could properly organise their forces. Although Lakhaugarh was strongly guarded under Dihingia Phukan, all the high officials including the Dangarias retreated after a feeble resistance (9 March). Many fled to Majuli.⁴²

Seeing the rapid advance of the Mughals, Jayadhvaj Singha now resolved on flight. There was all gloom in the capital. The King was overcome with profound grief at this national calamity. He held a council and decided on a flight to a secluded hill resort in the easternmost province of Namrup. King Jayadhvaj sent envoys with presents to sue for peace, but his overtures were again rejected and he was told that Mir Jumla would soon be in Gargaon, where alone he would treat with the Raja.⁴³

⁴²Barua, G.C., Op.cit., p.165, Bhuyan, S.P., Kamrupar Buranji, p.63; Gogoi, P., Op.cit., p.409.

⁴³Gait, Op.cit., p.137.

Under orders of the King about one thousand boats were engaged to remove the properties before the departure of the King to a secluded place. The King then left Gargaon first to Tipam (Charaideo) and thence to Namrup, accompanied by the Bura Gohain's father and a number of nobles and five thousand men.⁴⁴ The affairs of Gargaon were left in charge of Atan Bura Gohain, Banrukia Bar Gohain, Bhaga Barpatra Gohain, Namanial Raja Mahur and few other nobles. About one thousand elephants and two thousand men were also engaged to remove other articles left by the King before the arrival of the Mughals, yet all could not be removed.⁴⁵

After halting for three days at Lakha^u Mir Jumla marched through Gajpur and Tiromoni to Gargaon. A number of Ahom deserters had also joined him. At Gajpur he heard the news of the flight of the Raja and at once despatched a flying column with all speed to Gargaon to seize the elephants and other property which had not already been removed. The river Dihing and the Dikhow which falls into it, being too shallow for the Mughal fleet to sail up beyond Lakha^u, Mir Jumla proceeded by way of Salagarh and reached Debargaon in two days. (13 th March). At this stage, he received a diplomatic mission

⁴⁴Gait, Op.Cit., p.137; Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.63; Barua, G.C., Op.cit., p.166.

⁴⁵Bhuyan, S.K., Mir Jumla Asom Akraman, pp.47-48.

from Gargaon. The mission consisted of Bahbaria Katarki, Bhelai's (Sajati) son, Laghan Tamuli, Sawal Mudoi and Bhawarial Bamun. The Mughal general, suspecting the sincerity and also the absence of a single minister (Gohains) in the mission rejected the offer.⁴⁶ Another mission headed by Phul Barua Phukan was sent to Mir Jumla but this time also the overture was rejected.⁴⁷ Apparently the Ahom officers at Gargaon realising the imminent fall of Gargaon sued for peace in order to save the capital. Sri J.N. Sarkar has not mentioned anything about the diplomatic mission. However, it was possible that there was an attempt at peace-making but the Khan Khana was determined to seize Gargaon and saw no reason to accept the peace proposal at that stage. Nandang was occupied on the 16th March and on the day following, the 17th March, the Nawab entered Gargaon and occupied the royal palace.⁴⁸

Thus from 19 December 1661, the day of the fall of Koch Behar, to 17 March, 1662, when he entered Gargaon, Mir Jumla's advance had been a triumphal march. The historian Shinabuddin Talish who accompanied the expedition rightly boasted:

⁴⁶ Bhuyan, S.K., Kamrupar Buranji, p.63.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Gait, Op.cit., p.137; Sarkar, Sir J.N., Op.cit. p.105; Bhuyan, S.K., Atan Buragohain and His Times, p.26.

"Two kingdoms have been seldom conquered in the course of the same year by one army. The spoils taken in Assam were also enormous - 82 elephants, 3 lakhs of rupees in cash, 657 pieces of artillery, 1343 camel-survals, 1200 Ramchangis, 6750 match locks, 340 maunds of gun-powder, a thousand and odd boats and 173 store houses of paddy each containing from 10 to 100 maunds of grain."⁴⁹

The position of the Mughals was very unenviable.

Although he had issued rupees and paise struck at his mint in the Assam camp in the name of the Emperor Aurangzeb, he could never dream of establishing a government there.⁵⁰

Padmeswar Gogoi however, has expressed his doubt as to whether Mir Jumla had the power to mint coins in the name of the Emperor in the absence of Imperial order.⁵¹ Anyway, Mir Jumla conducted himself as a loyal Imperial servant and as such he did the work only to assert the Mughal prestige and influence over the newly conquered territories.

Mir Jumla preferred to chose his residence at Mathurapur which was situated on a high ground, seven miles south east of Gargaon. He entered his quarters on the 31 March 1662 with his main army. A garrison was left at Gargaon under Mir Murtaza to collect and send the immense booty to Dacca.⁵² Many out-posts were established north of Gargaon at Namdang and Trimohini (Tirumoni), where

⁴⁹ Sarkar, Sir J.N., op.cit., p.105.; reproduced from Fathiyah (49-50).

⁵⁰ Bhuyan, S.K., Atan Puragohain and His Times, p.28.

⁵¹ Gogoi, P., Op.cit., p.411 (foot note).

⁵² Sarkar, Sir J.N., Op.cit., p.105; Gait, Op.cit., p.138.

the Dikhou falls into the Dihing; westward at Gajpur and Dewalgaon on the way to Lakhau; southwards at Deopani and silpani at the foot of the Tiru hill; and eastwards at Abhoypur, sixteen miles from Garqoon on the Namrup side. A body of sturdy men under Jalal Khan held the bank of the Dihing. There were also a line of posts from Lakhau to Guwahati along the Brahmaputra.⁵³

As the rainy season was approaching, the real troubles of the invaders began. The Ahoms had been scared away and not crushed. They soon resumed their offensive. King Jayachvaj Singha held a war council at Raishat (Raisha) with the 'Dangarias' and the high nobles to draw up a strategy.⁵⁴ They reorganized the whole force and divided it under trusted and patriotic officers in order to attack the enemies at various points. Then the Ahoms inaugurated a campaign of harassing the invaders. Atan Buragohain, the Bar Ihukan and many other high nobles resolved to fight to the last. This guerrilla method of warfare which they adopted were unique and ultimately succeeded in their objectives.

Throughout the months of April, there were frequent skirmishes, mostly night attacks on the outposts. Even Gargaon was assaulted; but the sleepless

⁵³Sir Sarkar, Op.cit., p.106; Gait, Op.cit., p.138.

⁵⁴Gogoi, Op.cit., p.412.

vigilance of Mir Murtaza failed the attempt.⁵⁵ The Assamese cut off communications and supplies, seized and killed stragglers from the main body, harassed the enemy's garrisons by repeated surprises. Inhabitants of villages also joined these operations.⁵⁶ A successful night attack was made upon Gajpur and the Mughal troops were killed. Sarandaz Khan who was sent to recover the place could not reach it without ships. Muhammad Murad was accordingly sent with reinforcement, but Sarandaz Khan quarrelled with him and turned back. He, therefore, pushed forward but perished with most of his men. The whole fleet was thus captured and almost all sailors were killed.⁵⁷ At Deopani, the Ahoms threw up trenches round the Muhammedan fort and were continually on the alert to take it by assault, although they failed to do it due to reinforcement.⁵⁸

With the advent of the rainy season, roads and fields became awfully muddy and flooded immobilizing the Mughal cavalry. The Ahoms on the other hand got an opportunity to intensify their offensive. The Ahoms were habituated in fighting in the flood waters to their best advantage. They moved their boats with small groups and resorted to sudden night attacks on the enemy camps

⁵⁵ Sir Sarkar, Op.cit., p.106.

⁵⁶ Gait, Op.cit., p.138.

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp.138-139.

⁵⁸ Sir Sarkar, Op.cit., p.107.

which were detached from one another. But the position was most disadvantageous to the Mughals for want of a boat. Thus they were subjected to severe harassment by the local troops. In fact during the whole rainy season the Mughal army in Assam lived in a state of siege. Each of its forts stood like an island the land turned into lakes and the streams into raging torrents. The Mughal army consisting mainly of cavalry and fighting with cumbersome heavy artillery could not operate freely in such a situation.⁵⁹ Lakhau was subjected to repeated attacks by the Ahoms and as such no provision could be supplied to Gargaon. The nights were disturbed by the noisy attacks of the Ahoms.⁶⁰

Early in May, Dewalgaon was attacked but relieved in time. An attack on the thana of Deopani was repulsed after desperate fighting, but the place continued to be invested. The Ahoms cut off the link between the army and the navy of the enemy and established their supremacy over the north bank of the Dihing from Trimohini to the neighbourhood of Lakhau. At Gargaon too, the Ahoms concentrated and kept the garrison in a state of perpetual alarm. At the end of the month of May, Mir Jumla made an attempt to re-open communications with the fleet. Farhad Khan, the best fighter in the Mughal army was sent out with a hand-picked force to destroy the enemy's

⁵⁹ Sir Sarker, Op.cit., p.107.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

trenches on the way, reinforce the thanas of Mardang and Trimohini, restore that of Gajpur and fetch supplies from Lakhau.⁶¹ But it was a formidable task doomed to failure from the outset by reason of his lack of boats.⁶² With great difficulty he reached Tiok when he was intercepted by the enemies and a relieving party sent for him under Muhammad Mumin Beg failed to advance on account of heavy floods. After one week's untold sufferings, Farhad fought his way back to Trimohini narrowly escaping his own destruction and without carrying out the mission.⁶³ Gajpur was thus wrested back. Sir Sarkar however, says that 'after being beleaguered for a weeks, during which the commander ate up his oxen and horses, he seized some Ahom boats by a clever faint and surprised the negligent Ahom force on the other bank and put it to utter rout. The Mughals now returned to Trimohini in safety (about 6 June)'.⁶⁴

With the progress of the rains, Mir Jumla found it more and more difficult to maintain his out-ports and they were withdrawn to Gargaon and Patidarapur. All the rest of the country was now recovered. Swargadee Jayadhvaj singha returned from Namrup to Galaguri. Atan Buragohain personally took the field against the enemy

⁶¹Sarkar, Sir J.N., Op.cit., p.108.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Gait, Op.cit., p.139; Gogoi, B., Op.cit., p.416.

⁶⁴Sarkar, Sir J.N., Op.cit., p.109.

at Murkata. Even Gargaon and Mathurapur were so closely invested that if a man ventured to leave the camp, he was certain to be shot.⁶⁵ At the same time the noisy night attacks increased the frequency and ferocity. Delhi ceased to hear anything from Mir Jullu and there the Emperor performed the funeral rites to the expeditionary force.⁶⁶ The beleaguered Mughals became anxious to return to Hindustan out of despair.

Thus by the clever device of cutting off the supplies of rations, the troops at Gargaon and Mathurapur were reduced to the verge of starvation. In the words of Manucci, "The Faja blocked all supplies, setting fire to everything, and posting soldiers so that no food outside could get its way into the town".⁶⁷

In the meantime epidemic of fever swept over Mathurapur which carried off a large number of Mughal army. At this stage Baduli Phukan was appointed the Prime Minister and commander-in-chief who soon resumed the offensive. But the Ahom forces were defeated at Mathurapur by Dillir Khan.⁶⁸ A detachment under Sujan Sing chastised the Faja of Charing (later Chakrachhet Singha). The minor encounters that took place daily

⁶⁵ Gait, Op.cit., p.139.

⁶⁶ Sarkar, Op.cit., p.109.

⁶⁷ Bhuyan, S.K., Atan Buragohain and His Times, p.28.

⁶⁸ Sarkar, Sir J.N., Op.cit., p.109.

were countless. The well-bred cavaliers of Delhi fought without heeding how they were blistered by the sun or soaked in water and bespattered with mud, - but even vigilant and ever ready to repel the enemy. "The saddles were never bore of the riders; the horses backs were never stripped of the saddles; servants ceased to attend on their masters, but each and all, at least alarm, leaped up from his post and wielded his sword with both hands."⁶⁹

Failing to capture Mathurapur, Bauli Shukan turned against Gargaon. His powerful assault on the night of 8 July routed the "Pukari matchlock men" and he seized half the enclosures by breaking the bamboo railing. Great confusion and tumult arose.⁷⁰ The darkness of the night added to the confusion as the advancing Mughals could not distinguish between friend and foe. Some of the Ahoms set fire to the thatched roof of a mansion and the blaze enabled the Mughals to charge and expel the enemy. Farhad Khan, the Mughal Commander was wounded but the fort was completely recovered.⁷⁰ The usual night attack however, continued. The Mughals rapidly erected a mud-wall in place of bamboo fencing all around Gargaon. This wall in fact saved

⁶⁹Sarkar, Sir J.N., Op.cit., pp,109-110.

⁷⁰Ibid.,

Gargaon.⁷¹ On the 12 July, the grandest of all the assaults was delivered from four sides simultaneously under Baduli Phukan. But on all fronts the Muslims under Rachid Khan held their ground and repelled the attacks and never again was the enclosure by the Ahoms.⁷² Rachid Khan repulsed many minor assaults from the outskirts of Gargaon. "In short repose and peace visited the inmates of the city and the fort of Gargaon."⁷³ Meanwhile the fleet at Lakhau restored the communications with Bengal.

But the Mughals were not destined to be free from troubles. A terrible epidemic broke out at Mathurapur in the month of August. In the Mughal camp fever and flux carried off hundreds daily. Dilir Khan's corps was reduced from 1500 to 450 troopers. The whole of Assam was infected. According to Baduli Phukan's estimate, 2,30,000 people died in Assam in that year.⁷⁴ Sufferings at Mathurapur became so acute that the whole army camp was shifted to Gargaon (17 August). To add to this natural calamity, no suitable diet was available. The only food available was coarse rice. Price of food shot up. A pipe of tobacco sold at Rs.3, a toll of opium at a gold mahar, a seer of Mung dal and salt at Rs.10 each. Soldiers languished for want of wheaten bread; horses

⁷¹Sarkar, Sir, J.N., Op.cit., p.109-110.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Ibid., p.111.

⁷⁴Ibid.

perished from eating rice. Muslim soldiers lived on the meat of worn out draught oxen, horses and camels, till these too come to an end.⁷⁵ At the same time attacks on Gargaon continued with fresh vigour. The grand attack on the 15 September was defeated by the Mughals with heavy slaughter. Thereafter the place grew quiet and Shrank from provoking the Mughals.⁷⁶ Meanwhile pestilence reached the extremities of Gargaon. All kinds of food stuffs disappeared. Poor men did not spare the leaves of the trees, the grass on the ground or the herbs on the riverside growing under acute conditions of hunger. Mir Jumla lived like common soldiers, though he had a good store of delicacies. His examples were followed by many Mughal officers and they rendered tremendous services by supplying to the soldiers whatever available as food outside the Mughal camps. Many however, became utterly disappointed and they thought only of returning to their homes. "But, as Manucci aptly puts it", if it had been easy to get into, it was very difficult to get out of the country, owing to the floods, also the ambushes bid by the natives. It looked as if Mir Jumla would be quite used up there, and had it not been that by his prudence he was able to manoeuvre so skilfully, his retreat would have a great disaster.⁷⁷

⁷⁵Sarkar, Sir, J.N., Op.cit., p.111.; Gait, Op.cit. p.140; Bhuyan, S.R., Atan Buragohain and His Times, p.28.

⁷⁶Sarkar, Sir J.N., Op.cit., p.112.

⁷⁷Gait, Op.cit., p.140. Reproduced from Manucci, Tr. Irvine, vol. II, p.101.

By the end of September, the worst was over. The rain ceased and communications became easier. Pleasant breezes began to blow, and flowers blossomed again. Admiral Ibn Mussain who was left in charge of Lakhau did his job bravely, clearing off the thana of Dewargaon from the clutches of the enemies and restored the communication with Guwahati. Lachit, son of Morai Tamuli who was in command of the fort on the bank of the Brahmaputra near Lakhau was forced to withdraw.⁷⁸ This was no doubt a cheering news to Mir Jumla especially after a dreaded period of alarm, suspense and despair. The admiral sent messengers with the news of the outside world to the besieged Nawab and cooperated from the north to open the road to Gargaon.⁷⁹

Mir Jumla now decided to act. After three unsuccessful attempts he bridged the Dikhou river in order to open the way from Gargaon. He sent a force under Abul Hasan by way of Charing to Dewalgaon and thus communication was restored with the fleet. Hurriedly outposts were set up at Charing and Gajpur. From Lakhau large quantities of provisions were now sent by land and water under escort and arrived at Gargaon on the 24th and 1st October.⁸⁰ The Mughals quickly recovered their morale

⁷⁸ Barua, G.C., Op.cit., p.181.

⁷⁹ Sarkar, Sir J.N., Op.cit., p.113. Reproduced from Fathiyah.

⁸⁰ Sarkar, Op.cit., pp.113-114.

and became jubilant. The land having dried, cavalry could move easily. The king knowing the resumption of offensive by the Mughals with fresh vigour fled to Namrup again.⁸¹ Most of the Assamese peasantry deserted their home to the hill side out of panic.

On the 10 November, Abul Hasan compelled Gaduli Phukan to submit on the bank of the Dihing river. Mir Jumla himself set out to capture the fortifications of the Ahoms. He arrived at the Dihing on the 20 November and then by way of Salaguri, proceeded to Tipani in order to hunt out the fugitive King in the Namrup area (Charaideo).⁸² On the 18 December, Mir Jumla had a fainting fit which was the beginning of the disease of which he was to die. Tipam happened to be further point of Mir Jumla's advance. But with tenacity of purpose the Mughal general continued to lead the army. Rajmuni Raja Sahur (Raj Mantri Phukan) was at Kenduguri at this time guarding the Darika front. Garganya Raja Sahur was at Kenduguri at this time guarding the Darika front. Arun Bura Gohain remained at Mirkata. Raja Sahur took his position at Tipam.⁸³ When the remnants of the army of Assam were pursued beyond the Dihing river up to Dikhalatal, fierce fighting ensued at Mirkata between the

⁸¹Gait, Op.cit., p.141; Sarkar, Op.cit., p.154.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Bhuyan, S.K., Kamrupar Buranji, p.63.

forces of Atan Bura Gohain and Mir Jumla, both in land and water. The Mughal forces stationed at Charinig, Silpani, Chinatali, Charangua and Kalia hill - all were withdrawn so as to reinforce the troops of Mir Jumla. After nearly a day long fighting, the Bura Gohain retreated to Paniphat.⁸⁴ Atan Bura Gohain expressed his regret and said: "we cannot vanquish the Mughals in open warfare."⁸⁵ Baduli Phukan's last hope vanquished with the defeat of the Bura Gohain. He therefore, gave his surrender to the Mughals on November 30, 1662.⁸⁶ The reasons for the surrender of Baduli Phukan have been given in the Purani Asom Buranjī thus -

"When the King, after Bura Gohain's defeat was retreating to more interior hill recess, Baduli Phukan fell behind him in the march. At this, the King became angry suspecting the Phukan to have submitted to the Mughals. The suspicion of the King was secretly communicated to Baduli Phukan by the queen, who was his sister, through a messenger. Hearing this, Baduli submitted to Khankhana at Silikhatal."⁸⁷

Baduli is regarded as a traitor in the description of H. Blochmann.⁸⁸ Padmeswar Gogoi says that although the submission of Baduli Phukan created misunderstanding about

⁸⁴Goswami, H.C., Purani Asom Buranjī, pp.96-97.; Bhuyan, S.K., Kamrupar Buranjī, p.63.

⁸⁵Bhuyan, S.K., Atan Buragohain and His Times, p.251. Reproduced from Assam Buranjī, No.8.

⁸⁶Sarkar, Op.cit., p.114; Gait, Op.cit., p.141.

⁸⁷Goswami, H.C., Op.cit., p.97.

⁸⁸Blochmann, H., J.A.S.B., 1873, p.97.

him, he had probably no alternative to submission to save the country from utter ruin. 'It is doubtful whether he deserves the blame usually placed on him.'⁸⁹ Baduli's submission was followed^{by} defections in Ater camp. His brother, Maupia went to the side of the Mughals and both the brothers promised to capture the King and other nobles. Baduli Phukan was richly rewarded by Mir Jumla and made the Emperor's viceroy for Eastern Assam.⁹⁰ The son of Harideka, Uddhav Duaria, Monohar Kakati and many other distinguished nobles followed the example of Baduli.⁹¹ Manthir Phurali Barua, tempted by the example of Baduli Phukan made a bid to submit to the Mughals and to capture the King in lieu of some high office. But his treachery was detected by the King and later executed.⁹²

After desertion of Baduli, Jayadhvaj Sinha appointed Atan Bura Gohain the Rajmantri (Prime Minister) in January, 1662. Meanwhile Baduli Phukan, under instruction of the Mughal general, raised a local levy of three to four thousand men and accompanied the Mughal van in an attempt to hunt his former master down.⁹³ Maupia also fought at Mekurichowa at the head of the Mughal force

⁸⁹Gogoi, P. Op.cit., p.420 (foot-note).

⁹⁰Sarkar, Op.cit., p.114; Barua, G.C., Ahom Buranjī, p.185.

⁹¹Goswami, H.C., Op.cit., p.99; Barua, G.C. Op.cit., p.183.

⁹²Bhuyan, S.K., Atan Buragohain and His Times, p.33.

⁹³Sarkar, Op.cit., p.115.

against his own country men, where he lost heavily. Baduli's plan to capture the King was however, frustrated by Atan Bura Gohain.⁹⁴

On the Mughal side difficulties were again due to famine in Bengal. Further supplies were not forthcoming. Mir Jumla fell seriously ill and his soldiers threatened to desert rather than to enter the pestilential climate of Namrup.⁹⁵

The Ahom King was equally anxious to restore peace. Atan Bura Gohain himself realised that the continuance of hostilities would be disastrous to the Ahoms. He paid a short visit to the King's retreat at Charai-Khorong and deliberated with the monarch on the grave situation of the country. The King lamented much over his misfortune, saying, "God, the great dispenser, has deprived me of everything". To this Atan replied,

"His Majesty should not lose his heart because of what has happened. Success and failure, victory and defeat, constitute a normal phenomenon of life. When God becomes propitious, it would be possible to destroy our enemies."⁹⁶

The King then asked the Bura Gohain to procure the withdrawal of the Mughal forces from Assam by offering them

⁹⁴ Bhuyan, S.K., Atan Buragohain and His Times, p.33.

⁹⁵ Gaît, Op.cit., p.142; Sarkar, ^{Sr}Op.cit., p.115.

⁹⁶ Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.33.

an appropriate indemnity and tribute; otherwise, he declared he would retire to Nara, the ancient homeland of the Ahoms.⁹⁷ Khanun Rajmantri then despatched a peace mission consisting of a Muslim, named Sultan, Chandrai, Kamal and Chaturbhuj with presents to Bilir Khan who mediated in connection with the peace proposal. Mir Jumla accepted the Raja's request. Bilir Khan in turn wrote letters to the Rajmantri Mangaria expressing the desire to restore peace for the welfare of the people.⁹⁸

The general principle underlying the Ahom foreign policy was that in critical situation the enemies should be pacified by promises and if necessary by humiliating terms. It was a device seeking withdrawal of the enemy troops so as to save the country from foreign domination. So the peace proposal strictly conformed to the established diplomatic norms of the Ahoms. But this offer of the Ahoms was unexpected at a time when the Mughals themselves desired for an honourable retreat. The illness of Mir Jumla and the breakdown of the morale of the officers and common soldiers alike probably were known to the Ahoms. In spite of this fact they wanted to restore peace and

⁹⁷Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.33.

⁹⁸Ibid., p.65.

order considering the prolonged sufferings of the Assamese subjects. Moreover, the large scale surrenders in the Ahom camp definitely demoralised the King and his officers who apprehended more troubles from their own men. Apparently the King was very eager to save the country from further destruction. But Baduli Phuloi was opposed to any peace talks in as much as a conclusion of peace would mean his overthrow from the position of the Raja. But Mir Jumla and Dillir Khan were not convinced with the argument of Baduli, as they thought, the promises were not fulfilled by Baduli. "All that the bastard Baduli had boasted," remarked Mir Jumla, proved all false.⁹⁹

The terms of the treaty were negotiated by Dillir Khan and Bura Gohain representing their respective governments. Before the final conclusion of peace, an agreement was reached and Mir Jumla communicated the same to Emperor Aurangzeb for his assent. The Emperor sent a congratulatory reply for such a successful expedition. On the Ahom side, Jayadhwaj Singha at first found it very difficult to agree to some of the terms of the treaty particularly in regard to sending his daughter to the Muslim Emperor's harem. But after much persuasion by the Bura Gohain, he conceded in the greater interest of his Kingdom.¹⁰⁰ Thus the treaty was concluded at

⁹⁹ Gogoi, P., Op.cit., p.424 - Reproduced from Ramrupar Buranjī, p.65.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

Ghilajharighat in January 1663 A.D. (Saka, 1854, Magh).

There is much confusion about the date of the treaty as different dates have been given by the writers. Sir J.N. Sarkar put it at 5 January 1663 while Gait's date was 9 January. Sir Sarkar's observation is in accord with the accounts in Pathiyah. The terms of the treaty were as follows:-¹⁰¹

- (i) Jayadhvaj Singha to send his daughter to the Imperial harem accompanied by the son of the Tipam Raja.
- (ii) A war indemnity of 20,000 tolas of gold; 1,20,000 tolas of silver and 20 elephants to be made over by the King at once;
- (iii) Rupees three lakhs and ninety elephants to be supplied within twelve months, in three equal instalments;
- (iv) Thereafter, the Ahom King would pay an annual tribute of 20 elephants (10 tuskers and 10 makhundis);
- (v) Pending full payment of the indemnity one son each of the Bar Gohain, the Pura Gohain, the Barpatra Gohain and the Gargayan Rajmantri Phukan to be sent as hostages;
- (vi) The territories west of the Bharali river on the north bank of the Brahmaputra and west of the Kallong river on the south, were to be ceded to the Empire.
- (vii) The captives carried off by the Ahoms from the Mughal dominions were to be released; as also the family of Naduli Phukan whom the King had put into prison.

¹⁰¹ Sarkar, Op.cit., pp.115-116; Gait, Op.cit., p.142; Gogoi, P, Op.cit., pp.424-425.

Thus the Ahoms became a vassal of the Mughals on most humiliating terms. Their prestige and fame had reached a low ebb atleast temporarily. The nobles in general and the king in particular lost their morale. The heavy loss of men and materials added by the untold sufferings of the subject people was a tragic story in the annals of Ahom history. A great part of their misfortune was due to treachery of some Ahom officers. If the war continued for a few months more, the results might have been otherwise. But the Ahom officers were completely unnerved and dis-organised and had lost all courage to fight with vigour. Some of the officers, defected to the enemy camp. They failed to study the internal weaknesses in the Mughal camp. This is revealed from the fact that the peace proposal was offered by the Ahoms at a stage when the invaders were seriously thinking of early return due to prolonged sufferings and the fast deteriorating conditions of the health of Mir Jumla.

On the request of the Bura Gohain, Mir Jumla agreed to release all the Assamese prisoners of War except Baduli and few others.¹⁰² On 5 January, 1663, the Ahom King's daughter, Nangchen Gabharu also called Ramani Gabharu, the hostages and a part of the indemnity

¹⁰²Gogoi, P., Op.cit., p.425.

reached the Mughal camp.¹⁰³ One hundred male and one hundred female attendants and also large dowries were sent with the princess. The Mughal general and his high officials were also given valuable presents including elephants. Similarly Dillir Khan sent a number of presents to the King of Ason. Before departing, Mir Jumla sent a message to the King to assume the reins of the government with the assurance and good will that the Emperor's fame would be greatly enhanced on the arrival of the princess and the hostages.¹⁰⁴ Mir Jumla thus began his return journey with a broken heart and fatal illness on the 10 January 1663 and his army became jubilant at it.¹⁰⁵ According to some accounts, the Mughal general left Dergaon on the 25 January, 1663.¹⁰⁶ It appears that although Mir Jumla ordered his army for the return journey on the 10 January, they could leave Dergaon much later because of the illness of the general and also for making preparations. This is also evident from the fact that the general reached Faridkot on 11 February. According to Gait, he gave orders to return from Gargaon on the 9 January, 1663.¹⁰⁷ Mir Jumla felt so much weak that he had to travel by *palki* and

¹⁰³Gogoi, P., Op.cit., p.426; Sarkar, Op.cit., p.116.

¹⁰⁴Gogoi, Op.cit., p.426.

¹⁰⁵Sarkar, Op.cit., p.116.

¹⁰⁶Bhuyan, S.V., Atan Buragohain and His Times, p.31.

¹⁰⁷Gait, Op.cit., p.142.

sometimes by boat from Gargaon to Pandu through many obstacles on the way. During the progress of the Mughal army from Lakhau to Kajali, the men lived on water and their animals on grass.¹⁰⁸ The general halted at Guwahati from February 9 to 22, and settled some financial matters. Rashed Khan, after great reluctance, for which he was reprimanded by the Emperor, accepted the fouzdarship of Guwahati; and Muhammad Beg was appointed thanadar of Kajali under the fouzdar.¹⁰⁹ The Nawab, who had a relapse of his illness at Kajali grew seriously weak. So he had to give up his projected expedition to Koch Behar where its Raja, Prannarayan, had in the meantime, declared his independence. Paritola was reached on 28 February, but due to the alarming increase of his illness Mir Jumla embarked in a boat as advised by his doctor towards Dacca, dying on the way on 31 March, 1663, four miles above Khizirpur.¹¹⁰ The Emperor was aggrieved to hear the death of his great general, perhaps he realised that Mir Jumla had no personal ambition and whatever he did, was for the glory and prestige of the Empire. He also got rid of a powerful general whom he had feared. Amir Khan, son of Mir Jumla and Dilir Khan, Commander of the Assam Campaign were suitably rewarded

¹⁰⁸Gait, Op.cit., p.143.

¹⁰⁹Gogoi, Op.cit., p.427; Bhuyan, S.K., Star Buragohain and His Times, p.31.

¹¹⁰Sarkar, Op.cit., p.116; Gait, Op.cit., p.143; Bhuyan, S.K. Op.cit., p. 132; Manucci, Storia, p.237.

by the Emperor considering their hardship and sincerity. Mir Jumla took with him Baduli Phukan to Dacca hoping that his presence there would be of use in future dealings with Assam. He was allotted an estate with a comfortable income at Dacca. At a later stage Baduli played a pivotal role in the maintenance of diplomatic relations with Assam. He made vigorous attempts to instal his nephew, Laluk Bar Phukan of Guwahati as the Raja of Assam by exercising influences over Sultan Azamtara, the Subadar of Bengal. On 26th February, 1677, Baduli arrived at Guwahati along with Nawab Mansur Khan under instructions of the Subadar to take delivery of Guwahati from Laluk Bar Phukan. They accomplished their objectives as secretly planned and thus Guwahati was surrendered to the Mughals without resistance through the treachery of Baduli, Laluk Bar Phukan and many other nobles.

Some confusion has however, arisen regarding the number of princes sent to the Imperial harem as per the terms of the treaty. According to most of the accounts, Ramani Gabharu, daughter of the King through his junior consort Pakhari Gabharu who was in turn the daughter of famous general and statesman Momai Tamuli Bar Barua was offered. Padmeswar Gogoi observes, on the basis of some Buranjis as well as Mir Jumla's letter to

the Emperor that a princess of the Tipar Raja accompanied the princess Ramani Gabharu.¹¹¹ Sir Sarkar says that the sons of the Tipam Raja accompanied the princess. It is, therefore, almost clear that a princess of the Tipam Raja also accompanied the six year old princess of Jayadvaj Singha considering her to be a minor child and also found not dignified to be sent alone.

As per the terms of the treaty all the Muslim prisoners of war were released by the Bura Gohain before the departure of the Mughal army. But contrary to agreement Mir Jumla took with him about 12,000 Assamese subjects including women and children to Bengal.¹¹² Some Assamese might have voluntarily accompanied the Mughal army.

"Judged as a military exploit, Mir Jumla's invasion was a success. If its political consequences were not permanent, if the ceded territories were lost and even Guwahati wrested back from the Mughal grasp, only four years after his death, the fault was not his. No race can maintain an empire unless its sons are willing to garrison their conquests, and Mughal soldiers were heartily sick of this land of flood and earthquake,

¹¹¹Gogoi, P., Op.cit., p.426. (Also footnotes, p.426).

¹¹²Ibid., p.427.

pestilence and witchcraft. It is surprising that Aurangzeb did not lay to heart his own experiences in Balkh in his father's reign."¹¹³ Sir J.N. Sarkar has offered eloquent tribute to this great general, Mir Jumla thus : "He (Mir Jumla) did nothing which does not reflect the highest credit on him. No other general of that age conducted war with so much humanity and justice, nor kept his soldiers under such discipline; no other general could have retained to the last the confidence and even affection to his subordinates amidst such appalling sufferings and dangers."^{114A} It is true that he forbade strictly plunders, oppression and rape right from the beginning of his expedition in Assam. But inspite of his orders, atrocities were committed on the inhabitants of Assam. The object of inflicting such horrible torture was to force them to join the Mughals. The Ahoms too, retaliated by frightful methods of torture and killing whenever opportunities came. According to some accounts Mir Jumla offered reward to those who brought 'head's or 'prisoners alive' to him. On the other hand those who helped the Mughals were treated kindly. In short, he adopted all manner of wily methods to overcome the resistance of the people and conquer Assam.

¹¹³Sarkar, Op.cit., pp.116-117.

^{114A}Sir Sarkar, Op.cit., p.118.

Shikabuddin Talish regrets that inspite of the Raja's cruelty and Mir Jumla's kindness, the Assamese did not at all become submissive to the people of Islam.¹¹⁴ "With a hero like Mir Jumla, the rhetoric of Talish ceases to be extravagance; his eulogy of the general is not fulsome flattery but homage paid to a born king of men."¹¹⁵

According to S.N. Bhattacharya, Mir Jumla's invasion was the most daring and audacious pieces of imperialistic venture, almost unparalleled in the annals of Mughal India, and has not probably been surpassed even in modern times. The Assam expedition was really an impracticable and visionary scheme, which ended in a great discomfiture. The ultimate effects of the Assam campaign were disastrous to Mughal India; Koch Behar shifted away while Mir Jumla was in the thick of the Assam campaign. "To their inordinate greed for grasping what was almost unattainable, the Mughals sacrificed what was really their own by virtue of conquest and long possession."¹¹⁶

The only dark spot in his expedition was that he had no respect for the Hindu religion. He amassed enormous money by sacking temples. Even the Thakur (Priest) was

¹¹⁴Sarkar, Op.cit.,

¹¹⁵Ibid., p.119.

¹¹⁶Bhattacharya, S.N., Mughal's North-East Frontier Policy, pp. 295-296.

forced to take beef and embrace Islam. He had inordinate greed for wealth and fame. It is very unfortunate that a general like Mir Jumla did not hesitate to dig out the treasures offered to the dead from the graves (p. 429).¹¹⁷ Huge stores of ornaments and coins were extracted from the graves and seized. Some expert Ahoms manufacturers of guns and gunpowder were also taken along with him as he considered them to be of high standard. But he failed to secure, inspite of his best efforts, any Assamese elephant driver of repute.¹¹⁸

After departure of the Mughals, Jayadhvaj Singha returned to Bakata from Namchang. He then called his officers who had been scattered during the war to meet at Bakata. In fact, the Assamese reverses were attributed to the delinquency and treachery of some top ranking nobles. Jayadhvaj Singha held some officers responsible for the disaster and started punishing them. Bengnun Raja Sahur, who after his dismissal from the post of Bar Phukan, helped the enemies by showing a secret route to Central Assam, faced trial. But he pretended illness and later committed suicide. Banruchia Langichang Bor Gohain who was Chief Commander on the northern front was accused of not sending his troops to help the southern

¹¹⁷Gogoi, Op.cit., p.429.

¹¹⁸Ibid., p.430.

army and so was arrested. The Ghora Konwar and Gajpuria Hatibarua were chained for deserting the King.¹¹⁹ Many more officers were punished. The Boragohain was alarmed over the cruelties perpetuated by the King. It threatened even the stability of the Kingdom at a very critical time. As advised by him and Khamun Rajmantri Phukan, the King gave up the hunt for the offenders.¹²⁰ It is a fact that collapse of the royal authority following the occupation of Gargaon by the Mughals reacted severely on the morale of the Assamese people to its lowest ebb. A number of leading nobles either wilfully neglected their duties or had fraternised with the Mughals with the hope of obtaining preferments. Those who were really involved in the cases of delinquency and treachery deserved to be punished. But the action of the King in punishing his officers right and left, without realising the consequences thereof, was really reprehensible. The series of reverses followed by the rapid advance of the invaders coupled with defection in the rank and file of the Ahom force completely unnerved the Ahom King. But he firmly believed that failures and success were only temporary phases in the history of a nation. He also realised that the Mughals had no desire to stay in Assam permanently and in the event of

¹¹⁹ Bhuyan, S.K., Kamrupar Buranji, p.67.

¹²⁰ Gogoi, F., Op.cit., p.431.; Goswami, F.C., Purani Asam Buranji, p.129.

their departure, the dark days would be over. With this conviction he preferred the safety of his life to surrender. The courage with which he fought and expelled the Mughals from the vicinity of Kamrup earlier and occasional instructions that he issued to his subordinates in the conduct of the war from Namrup bear testimony to his high sense of patriotism and statesmanship. Nevertheless, his flight produced misunderstanding among the people and greatly undermined their morale.

Jayadhvaj Singha desired to see the condition of beloved city of Gargaon. But inspite of the advice of his priests to the contrary he came to Gargaon. He was shocked with grief and wept bitterly seeing the ruined condition of the capital. His tears of grief did not stop and developed into a disease. He returned back to Bakata but did not survive long. He earnestly made an appeal to his ministers and other nobles to be united and reconstruct the shattered kingdom. He died shortly afterwards (November, 1663).¹²¹

The relations between the two powers during the years immediately following the departure of Mir Junla form an important chapter in the history of Assam. The experience of the war raised the standard of diplomacy and efficiency in the administration. The Mughal Emperor and Dilir Khan made

¹²¹Bhuyan, S.K., Kamrupar Buranji, p.69; Gogoi, P. Op.cit., p.432; Gait, Op.cit., p.149.

diplomatic correspondences with the Ahom court in friendly terms and also exchanged presents to each other. The Mughals continued to occupy their frontier posts, Kajali on the south bank and Bansbari on the north bank till 1667.¹²²

Two Assamese envoys, Sunatan and Chandra-Kandali left the Ahom capital on 25th December 1663 in the Company of the Mughal envoys, Dorr Beg and Rustom Beg. As the envoys were Brahmins, separate houses were constructed on the bank of the Jumna for them. After eighty days of interval, the Katakis were produced before the Emperor. Having seen the epistles, the Emperor promised to give back the territories occupied in excess of the Koch territories and also to make over the captured Assamese subjects. The Katakis were richly presented by the Emperor. They carried an epistle meant for the Ahom monarch.¹²³ The promises were never materialised.

The Assamese paid the promised war indemnity by instalments. But in course of time, the annual tribute fell into arrears. The Fouzdar of Guwahati became angry at the delay in payment of the balance. So consequently disagreement started. The four sons of the principal nobles remained as hostages at the court of the fouzdar

¹²²Sarkar, Sir, J.N., Op.cit., p.120.

¹²³Bhuyan, S.K., Kamrupar Buranji, pp.86-87;
Bhuyan, S.K., Padshah Buranji, p.234.

of Guwahati to ensure the fulfilment of the terms of the treaty. Besides, two Ukils and one Barnudoi (merchant) had to remain attached to the fouzdar's establishment to assist him in the conduct of his political and commercial relations with Assam.¹²⁴ The Ahoms were sincere initially in payment of the war indemnity. In case of delays, which was beyond their control especially about the catching of elephants, they replied: "Is it possible on our part to desist from payment wilfully having our four sons living in your place?"¹²⁵

While the Mughals were insisting on the timely and prompt payment of the indemnity, the Ahoms were preparing secretly to launch an attack on Guwahati. They also negotiated co-operation from the Rajas and other chiefs of the neighbouring territories. The Ahoms were now waiting for an exciting provocation from the Mughals.

Having enhanced the power and prestige of the Mughals after the treaty of Ghilajharighat, the two successive Mughal fouzgars of Guwahati, viz., Rachid Khan and Feroz Khan requested their Assamese counterpart to furnish to them with few pretty damsels from Assam. The infuriated monarch Swargadeo Chakradhwaj Singha refused point-blank to accede to the request of the fouzdar.

¹²⁴ Bhuyan, S.K., Atan Buragohain and His Times, p.34.

¹²⁵ Ibid., pp.35-36. Reproduced from Ms. Assam Buranji No. 41.

The request were definitely humiliating to the Ahom King who immediately ordered an attack on Guwahati. The united efforts of the Ahom forces led by Lachit Barphukan and the Prime Minister, Atan Buragohain resulted in the infliction of a severe defeat upon the Mughals in a series of battles and ultimately driven out of Guwahati after the battle of Itakhuli (1667). Thus within five years of the conclusion of the treaty of Ghilajharighat the Ahoms recovered their lost territories by expelling the Mughals from Guwahati and other strong-holds of the neighbouring areas. The Mughals again tried to regain their strength and a number of battles were fought near Saraighat and Pandu. The Imperialists under the generalship of Raja Ram Singha, was finally defeated in a fierce naval engagement at Saraighat (March, 1671 A.D.) by the Ahoms led by General Lachit Barphukan.

C H A P T E R - X

AHOM DIPLOMACY

Throughout the long period of their rule in Assam, the Ahoms followed certain diplomatic norms in dealing with their neighbours. At the beginning of the consolidation of power in the Brahmaputra valley they had to deal with numerous tribes, both in the hills and the plains. The Ahoms were guided by the principle of 'Sama-dama-bheda-danda' (conciliation, concession, rupture and force). This doctrine had been practised by the rulers of ancient India since the days of the Mauryas. The Ahom rulers practised this principle before the advent of the Mughals. As a result, they could establish their supremacy as a sovereign power in the north-east of India. During the period of conflicts with the Mughals their policy was invigorated although exceptions had been noticed occasionally due to political expediency. Frequent conflicts with the Mughals offered wide scope for flexibility but the Ahoms conducted their foreign relations within the framework of what they considered to be their diplomatic norms.

The Ahoms maintained diplomatic relations with the Kings of Koch Behar. King Biswa Singha first paid a

good-will visit to the Ahom king and also exchanged presents.¹ However, the Ahom monarchs regarded the Koch kings under the category of 'Thapita-Chanchita' - a ruler of a state installed by the Ahoms under their patronage with subordinate position. The Koch-Ahom relations began to take definite shape in the wake of the Mughal invasions of Koch Kingdoms. Raja Praikhsrit Narayan of Kamrup sent envoys to Gargaon for an alliance against the Mughals. This was agreed to and the Ahom King Pratap Singha married a Koch princess in order to cement the bond of friendship. The former hoped that by these means Koch Kamrup would turn into a buffer state between Assam and Mughal India. But the alliance proved abortive because of the failure of the Assam King to give timely assistance to the Koch King. It seemed Pratap Singha as advised by his nobles, refrained from giving assistance apprehending danger. If Pratap Singha had honoured the alliance, he would have stood to gain. The Ahom-Mughal conflicts that followed soon showed how grossly he missed his opportunity. Kamrup was annexed to the Mughal Empire and thus it became the military base for the Assam campaigns.

Now that the Mughals became hostile neighbours of

¹Gait, E.A., A History of Assam (Reprint-1967), p.98.

the Ahoms, the energies of the latter would be harnessed for the security of the kingdom. The solution of the problem lay in a defensive line and this exercised the mind of King Pratap Singha.

Bali Narayan, the fugitive Koch prince of Kamrup was later on installed by the Ahoms as a vassal King of the newly created state of Darrang. It was hoped that this King of Darrang would be an effective check to the further advance of the Imperialists. With this end in view, the Ahoms continued to give military support to Balinarayan. The latter fought gallantly against the Mughals throughout his life to recover his motherland. His example was followed by many Koch Chiefs of Kamrup. Supported by the Assamese, they raised their heads against the Mughals and succeeded in keeping the invaders in a state of siege nearly for a decade. The Ahom policy succeeded to a great extent as they were able to keep the Mughals busy fighting in their territories against Balinarayan and the Koch Chiefs for quite some time.

The maintenance of peace and security in the country and its protection from foreign attack constitute the common objectives of every government. In the discharge of these duties, the Ahoms were seriously involved in a prolonged armed conflict with the Mughals. This

warranted restructuring of the diplomatic policy. Pratap Singha now placed the diplomatic service on a proper footing. For the conduct of these services, he replaced the Ahom Katakis by Brahmin Katakis. The latter were considered to be gifted with persuasive faculty and intelligence who could easily match for the envoys or 'ukils' of Mughal India. The need for a better class of envoys was strongly felt by the Ahom King due to the grave situation that had arisen after Mughal invasions. He believed that the Katakis had a very crucial role to play in achieving territorial integrity. They must imbibe the softer arts of peace and the sterner qualities of the mind to react to evolving situation. Pratap Singha's detailed instructions to the Katakis relating to the manner in which an ambassador was to start on his mission were really very inspiring and they proved his diplomatic competence. The Katakis carried both written and oral messages to the foreign courts. They were to be sent back as soon as their mission was over. They enjoyed immunity from violence and insult. No case of indecorous conduct is found in the Ahom history. But sometimes, the Ahom envoys had to carry rather inaccurate information to the Mughals even at the cost of their own lives.

A remarkable feature of Ahom diplomacy in periods

of crises as well as in peace time was that they could master the support of the neighbouring powers of the hills and the plains against the invaders. To enlarge the sphere of political power, envoys were despatched to the courts of the neighbouring Rajas with various objectives, such as making of friendship, exchange of ideas, maintenance of trade relations etc.. The Ahom Kings considered it their duty to study the strength and weakness of the enemy, their movements, political behaviour etc.. To them, the sole aim of a King was to destroy the enemy.

Treachery and falsehood were absent in the conduct of the diplomatic relations. Raja Satrajit who maintained friendly relations with the Ahoms for some time was later found out to be a traitor. Through the policy of conciliation and concession he was invited to a conference at Umananda. The motive behind holding this conference was to put Satrajit under arrest. But the crafty Raja escaped arrest leaving the conference soon. Despite the fact that Satrajit and the Barphukan were responsible for the failure of the peace missions, the Ahoms did not desire to effect a forcible capture of Satrajit apprehending serious conflict. However, the Barphukan was severely punished for his treachery and delinquency. On a different occasion, the Ahoms accepted

this sincerity - the peace proposal of Birukaji, a Mughal envoy as it conformed to the established principles of Ahom Government. It turned out that Raja Satrajit out-witted the Barphukan in diplomacy.

The Ahom Katakis performed their duties in a manner which did not leave any scope for dissatisfaction. During the period from 1639 to 1658, they exchanged a number of good-will missions along with written correspondences with the fouzdar. At no stage the Katakis incurred any displeasure of the Imperialists. The latter also reciprocated the same feelings to the Ahoms. Their diplomacy succeeded in that both sides could feel that either could gain something. Hostilities were renewed only when the Ahoms took up the offensive during the reign of Jayadhwaj Singha.

The Ahoms firmly believed that diplomacy was not strictly concerned with ideals but with achieving practical results for the State. The doctrine of realism out-weighted the doctrine of idealism. Ends were more important than means. A policy was to be judged by the results it achieved. On many occasions they resorted to delaying tactics in order to gain time for full preparations for war. The Ahoms sent Katakis to the Mughals

ostensibly to make friendship with false promises on a number of occasions since they believed that he this won't stand them in good stead.

The tasks of the Assamese envoys were manifold - comprising display of friendship, conciliation, concession and like feeling. After the treaty of 1639, both the Ahoms and the Mughals through exchange of good-will missions emphasised the need for continuance of peace and friendship. There had been brisk trade among the merchants of both sides. Elephant catching formed an important part of the work of the Mughals in their territory. In course of undertaking the 'Kheda operations', sometime the Mughal subjects crossed over to the Assam territory. The Assamese viewed with serious concern such unauthorised actions of the foreigners. Some cases of harassment on the Mughal subjects by the Assamese following such entry had been reported by the Fouzdar. These incidents became the subject matter of the epistles exchanged between the Barphukan and the fouzdar of Guwahati.

The Ahoms had a network of espionage system for the administration of internal affairs. This was necessary not only to watch the movements of the foreigners visiting Assam in the garb of traders and merchants but also to keep watch on the activities of the nobles. Besides

these, the spies had to maintain strict vigilance on the Muslim captives who were allowed to settle in Assam. During the reign of Pratap Singha, a new class of spies was introduced, called the 'Sajati', the posts of which were strictly confined to the persons of the royal clan. Sometimes the Katakis were engaged in the services of the spies to deal with serious cases of misconduct and conspiracies of the nobles. The cumulative effect of these measures was that the Ahoms could retain their territorial integrity in the face of terrible odds.

During the Ahom-Mughal conflicts, the Ahoms made attempts on several occasions to establish international relations in support to their cause. Before the Ahom attack on Hajo (1618), they could enlist the support of the Eighteen hill Rajas, the Dimarua Raja besides Raja Dharmnarayan of Darrang. After Mir Jumla's invasion King Jayadhwaj Singha made earnest attempts from his camp at Namrup hills to get the support of the neighbouring powers. He sent emissaries to Koch Raja Prannarayan enquiring of his present condition. The Ahom Raja also narrated to the Koch Raja the circumstances under which he had to leave his palace. Prannarayan through his envoy Kanai, expressed his deep sympathy and grief at the

sufferings of the Assamese in the wake of Mir Jullu's invasion.² The Koch Raja also in his reply promised all help to regain their lost prestige. He compared himself with Arjuna and the Ahom King to Sri Krishna and added that the Ahom king should not feel distressed at having temporarily lost his kingdom, as hofman-narayan) too lost his Kingdom in the same manner.³ Jayadhwaj Singha's reply bore an evidence of his unflin-
gging self-confidence and he wrote -

"Even when the sun is once eclipsed, does it not make its appearance again? when fire and wind act in union they take no time in burning the trees and the grasses. So we can also destroy the enemy if we establish an effective alliance between us two."

Raja Jasamanta Rai of Jayantia and Raja Manik Singha of Nartiang also expressed their grief and sympathy at the loss of men and sufferings of the people through their emissaries to Jayadhwaj Singha. These Rajas promised to extend effective cooperation to Assam in order to wreak vengeance on the Mughals.⁴

A significant aspect of the diplomatic relations of this time was that the rulers put special care on the protection of cows and Brahmans. This implied that the

² Bhuyan, S.K., Kamrupar Buranji (ed.), p.70.

³ Ibid., (ed. 1958), pp.71-74.& 79-80.

⁴ Bhuyan, S.K., Atan Buragohain and His Times, p.40.

rulers desired peace and security of the entire subjects and emphasised the need to avoid war. It is also worthwhile to mention that the envoys carried the messages at the risk of their lives. In the course of their journey to the foreign courts many such envoys were captured by the Mughals as they (envoys) had to travel through the Mughal's territory.

Although Jayadhwaj Singha earned a bad name because of his flight to Namrup and was called by the nickname the 'Bhaganiya Raja' (The King who took to flight), Consequent upon the invasion of Mir Jumla, he felt compelled to do so in the interest of the nation. He continued to direct his operations from the hills of Namrup. His action seemed to be politically justified conforming to Kautilya's prescriptions in his famous Arthasastra. "When it is impossible to ward off danger from all sides, a king should run away, leaving all that belongs to him; for if he lives his return to power is certain as was the case with Suyatra and Udayana".⁵ The defection of a number of top ranking officers to the enemy camp seriously undermined his morale and so he preferred flight to surrender. There is no denying the

⁵Bhuyan, S.K., Kamrupar Buranjī, p.83; Gogoi, T., The Tai and the Tai Kingdom, p.434. Reproduced from P.P. Bhandarkar's - lectures on the Ancient History of India - Calcutta University, 1919, p.358.

fact that Jayadhwaj Singha was a great patriot which stood revealed from the death-bed injunction that he issued to the nobles. He asked his ministers to protect the people according to the tradition of the land. "It should be your earnest endeavour", said the dying monarch, "to extract from the nation's bosom the spear of humiliation fixed upon it by your enemy, the Mughals."⁶

It is to be conceded that during the time of Mir Jumla's invasion, Ahom diplomacy failed miserably. Mir Jumla was able to control the situation by diplomacy and force of arms. Through his policy of concession and rupture he won over a few Ahom officers. The Ahom general Baduli Phukan later joined the Mughal force and fought against his own people for self-aggrandisement. Mir Jumla was actuated by the aphorism 'breaking two bones by knocking them together'. Probably Aurangzeb, encouraged by this policy of his great general, applied this method while dealing with the Afgan tribes of north-west frontier at a subsequent stage.

Ahom diplomacy in the post-Mir Jumla period was marked by false promises and flattery. After the treaty of Ghilajharighat they succeeded in creating confidence

⁶Bhuyan, S.K., Atan Buragohain and His Times, p.42. (Quoted from Assam Buranjī (MS) No.8).

in the minds of the Mughals by prompt payment of the first instalment of the indemnity. But gradually they resorted to delaying tactic in respect of the payment of the indemnity without however, leaving any scope for hostile intentions or suspicion. The Ahoms firmly believed that the treaty was concluded under compelling circumstances and in doing so, they followed their traditional diplomatic norms. They considered the treaty as a stop-gap measure and as such retained their superficial friendship with the Mughals only to gain time for making adequate preparations for war. Jayadhwaj Singha maintained intimate relations with the veteran Mughal Commander Dillir Khan who was instrumental in making the treaty. The former even sent presents through two Ahom princes, Brajanath and Chikan to Dillir Khan for having preserved the cows and Brahmans and the Assamese subjects.⁷ The devastations caused by the invasion of Mir Jumla were really shocking. King Jayadhwaj Singha realising the gravity of the situation did not hesitate to write to Emperor Aurangzeb about the degradation caused to the land. He considered it as his primary duty to protect his subjects and the country from further annihilation and with this end in view he had to yield to the humiliating terms of the treaty.

⁷ Bhuyan, S.K., Atan Buragohain and His Times, p.41.

Emperor Aurangzeb was convinced after his discussion with the two Assamese Katakis, viz., Chandara Kandali and Sanatan and had promised to return the territories which were in possession of the Mughals in excess of the limits considered to be legitimate. The Emperor however, directed the Katakis to see the Subadar at Dacca. Consequently the subadar despatched his envoy, Panditrai to Assam along with the Assamese Katakis to impress upon the King that the territories in question belonged to the Koches and the Assam's legitimate boundaries were Bharali on the north bank and Kajali on the south.

The system of having permanent ambassadors was followed according to the terms of the treaty of Ghilajharighat. Two Ukils (envoys), one Barman (leading merchant) and four princes were required to stay with the fouzdar at Guwahati. These provisions were stipulated to secure regular payment of indemnity and to maintain friendship between the two countries. Besides these, a six year old princess^{*} of the King was sent to the Emperor's harem. By accepting these terms, the Ahoms almost acknowledged the position of a subordinate ruler.

*Princess Nang-feng alias Pamani Gabharu, daughter of Jayadhwaj Singha. She was later married to Prince Muhammad Azam, son of Aurangzeb and was renamed Bahadharu Begum.

Jayadhwaj Singha sacrificed his personal interest by sparing his daughter for the national interest. Significant features of the diplomatic relations of this period was the system of keeping merchant in the foreign court. Apparently this system was practised with a view to maintaining commercial relations between the two sides.

Atan Buragohain, the greatest diplomat and statesman of the era exchanged a number of diplomatic letters with his counterpart during the post Mir Jumla period. These letters reveal a combination of restraint and boldness. Shaista Khan, the Subadar of Bengal in his letter to the Buragohain emphasised the need for friendship and also expressed his dissatisfaction for not receiving letters from the latter. The Buragohain wrote one letter to the Subadar and seven to the Fouzdar dealing mainly with the observance of treaty obligations. He always stressed the need for peace and friendship for the protection of the 'cows and the Brahmans'. After recovery of Guwahati in November 1667 A.D., Atan Buragohain had occasion to make a vehement reference in his letter to Shaista Khan to the incident of insult of the Assamese envoy and also the 'Barmudoi' by Baidi Khan, the fouzdar at the reception at Umananda.⁸ The

⁸ Bhuyan, S.K., Atan Buragohain and His Times, p.334.

Buragohain charged the Mughals with maltreatment meted out to the diplomatic personnel. He also referred to the indecorous behaviour of the fouzders by asking for some Assamese damsels. The Swargadeo was seized with indignation and ordered an attack on Guwahati.

The combined effort of Chemun Rajmantri and Atan Buragohain soon succeeded in restoring the morale of the people and restoring order in the country after the withdrawal of the Mughal troops from Assam. The Buragohain was equally anxious to recover Guwahati for which preparations had earlier started. Simultaneously he continued to maintain friendship with the Mughals under the provisions of the treaty of Ghilajharichat. So long as the preparations for war were remained incomplete, the Buragohain acted in restraint and tried as far as practicable to fulfil the treaty terms. His representations in his epistles to foreign courts explaining the view-points of the government reveal his diplomatic competency.

King Chakradhwaj Singha showed his impatience to recover Guwahati as he said "My ancestors had never been subordinate to others, and I cannot tolerate this subordination any longer, as death is preferable to a life of subordination to foreigners."⁹ Atan Buragohain

⁹Bhuyan, S.K., Atan Buragohain and His Times, p.255.

replied politely that resumption of hostilities at that juncture would not be a wise step because the preparations were still negligible. Having heard the news of the success of the Maratha Chief Shivaji against the Mughals through an emissary of Raja Prannarayan of Koch Behar, Chakradhwaj was encouraged to resume the hostilities. The king was also seized with fury when he heard of the request for Assamese dancels by fouzdar Rachid Khan.¹⁰ The Buragohain, however, counselled patience by pointing out once again the inadequacy of their war preparations. The request for Assamese girls was repeated by Feroz Khan, the successor of Rachid Khan, through Bholanath Kanangoe. The two Assamese envoys, Madhavcharan and Paramananda received the letter written by Bholanath on behalf of the fouzdar. The Ahoms considered this letter as most humiliating since it violated the established norms of diplomacy. Apparently, the demand was made without the knowledge either of the Subadar or of the Emperor. Soon after this incident the Ahoms led their victorious arms beyond Guwahati under the generalship of Lachit Barphukan. This victory was also the result of the superb diplomatic skill of Atan Buragohain.

In the post Mir Jumla period, while the Ahoms

¹⁰Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.56.

were firmly engaged in fighting the forces of Ram Singha, the King kept constant touch with the progress of the war through the Katakis. Lachit Barphukan, the Ahom general had his own spies to report to him direct during the time of the battles of Saraighat (1669-1671).

Having been defeated repeatedly by the Ahoms, Ram Singha was compelled to resort to diplomatic manoeuvres. He proposed to offer three lacs of rupees to Lachit Barphukan in lieu of the surrender of Guwahati through the Mughal envoy secretly. He also promised in the name of the God to give everything to the Ahom general if the latter agreed to cede the territories to the west of Asurar Ali* and the Barnadi as stipulated earlier by the treaty of 1639. The Barphukan was apparently seemed to weigh the promises. He was also unnerved at the loss of about ten thousand Assamese soldiers in a series of battles near Saraighat. But the soldier - statesman Atan Buragohain politely prevented the Barphukan from entertaining any notion of compromise. Atan Buragohain stood like a rock and with his courage of conviction he carried Lachit with him to struggle on till the final victory. During this period envoys and spies had a

*Asurar Ali - the name of the road near Guwahati which marked the boundary line between the Mughal empire and Assam in 1639.

a crucial role to play. Once Lachit Barphukan punished some Katakis for accepting tiny presents from the Mughals.¹¹ Ram Singha was bewildered after seeing the valour of the Assamese soldiers. He once again offered an amount of rupees three lacs along with a garland of pearls through the Ahom Katakis, Madhavcharan to Barphukan. The shrewd Katakis apprehending danger, did not disclose this information to the Barphukan. Thus Ram Singh's diplomacy failed. He was defeated in the decisive battles at Saraighat. He left Assam with the memory of the heroic deeds and native patriotism of the Assamese.

¹¹Bhuyan, S.K., Anglo-Assamese Relations, p.31.

C H A P T E R - X I

CONCLUSION

We have come to the end of our study. A brief recapitulation of the events running through nearly three quarters of a century is called for.

With the dawn of the seventeenth century a new era began in the history of the north-east frontier of India. The era is crowded with events of momentous significance for Ahom-Mughal relations. The Mughal invasion of Assam came in the wake of imperialistic ventures of the Bengal Subadars aimed at extending the Imperial sway up to the prosperous Brahmaputra valley in the north-east frontier. The grim determination of the Assamese to maintain their independence and integrity led to inevitable clashes between the two powers. A study of the diplomatic relations of this period reveals the saga of successive military exploits followed by diplomatic interludes.

The Ahom rulers of Assam enjoyed the uninterrupted sovereignty from the beginning of the thirteenth century for nearly six hundred years barring a brief period of little less than five years after Mir Junla's

invasion. The Koch Kingdom of Kamrup up to the river Barnadi in the east remained in possession of the Mughals during the periods from 1613-1658, 1661-1667 and 1679-1682. The Mughals were finally expelled beyond the river Manas by the year 1682 and thus a part of the former Koch Kingdom passed into the hands of the Ahoms. Kamrup which was also called lower Assam was evidently outside the pale of Assam suzerainty.

The Assamese succeeded in overthrowing the repeated Mughal invasions. Their sense of patriotism and efficiency had been exemplified through their determination to fight the enemies throughout the long period of the conflict. There had been temporary reverses for the Ahoms in the course of the prolonged war. But these reverses could not produce any adverse effect in their foreign policy. The Ahoms regarded these reverses as misfortunes and tried to overcome them when opportunities came.

The Mughal's north-east frontier policy and its successes mainly depended upon the energy and resourcefulness of the Subadar of Bengal. This is evident from the determination of Subadar Islam Khan to extend the Mughal sway over the Koch territories during the reign

of Jahangir till the year 1613. Ibrahim Khan Fath Jahan, another Subadar of Bengal displayed the same energy and spirit in the subsequent conflict in Kamrup during the period from 1620 to 1624. His successor, Islam Khan, through his diplomatic skill conducted the war against the Assamese from 1635 to 1639 and forced the King of Assam to conclude the treaty of 1639. These invasions were, however, a part of the traditional forward policy initiated and invigorated by the Subadars of Bengal. Emperor Jahangir showed little interest in the affairs of the north-east due to inherent weakness of the administration at Delhi. His successor Shah Jahan displayed the same spirit as that of his father. Apparently, Mughal's north-east frontier policy during his reign lacked boldness and clarity.

Even since the conquest of Kamrup in 1613, the relationship between the Mughals and the Ahoms continued to be inimical. The reasons which encouraged the Ahom Monarch Pratap Singha to intervene in the Koch-Mughal affairs were many. He was really alarmed at the rapid advance of the Mughals which also endangered the security and integrity of his kingdom. He was equally worried to see the plight of his neighbour, the Koches with whom

the Ahoms had been maintaining friendship for a long time. His policy of matrimonial alliance with the Koch King however, failed due to mistakes of his own.

The close proximity of the two powerful neighbours was bound to create problems. The period of nearly two years was marked by trade rivalries, infiltration of Mughal subjects into Assam, unauthorised trading in Assam's territory resulting in mutual rivalry and bitterness. Eventually the two powers were involved in armed conflict in 1615 in the wake of the Mughal's invasion of Assam. The attack was soon thwarted by the Assamese. Then followed a series of battles. Mughal imperialism in the north-east of India produced a sense of political integration among the rulers of this region. They stood united behind the Ahom King against their common enemy, the Mughals. The combined forces of the Ahoms, the Damarua Raja, the Darrang Raja and the Eighteen hill Pajas could resist further advance of the Mughals beyond the river Barnadi. For a couple of years the Mughals remained in alarm and perpetual fear because of the hostile attitude of these neighbours.

The Ahoms remained aloof of the direct conflict with the Mughals for sometime. They considered it futile

to engage themselves in fighting in the enemy's territory. However, they succeeded in keeping the Mughals busy fighting against Balinarayan, an ally and a vassal king of the Ahoms. At the same time, the Ahoms took measures to strengthen the frontier in order to deal effectively with the Mughals. As a result of these two-pronged measures, the Ahoms were able to maintain their territorial integrity for a long time.

The out-break of widespread revolts of the Koch Chiefs in Kamrup engaged the attention of the Ahom Monarch. At the initial stage of the rebellions, the Ahoms did not come to the picture directly; but they lent their sympathy to the cause of the rebel Koches against the Imperialists. The defeat of the Koch Chiefs in the series of battles however, prompted the Ahom King to intervene on behalf of the Koches at a later stage. He apprehended danger to his Kingdom in the event of total annihilation of the Koch powers. Moreover, Balinarayan had in the meantime come to the help of these Koch leaders considering the cause of the latter as common cause. Eventually the Ahoms joined the forces of the Koches in Dakhinkol of Kamrup. The combined forces brought almost total destruction of

the Imperialists resulting in the expulsion of the latter from Dakhinkol. But soon, thereafter, the Mughals under the command of Mirza Nathan forced the Ahoms to withdraw their forces as far as to their frontier post of Kajalimukh.

Failing to establish their hold and also to crush the enemy in Kamrup, the Ahoms gradually withdrew from the arena of Kamrup politics. Thus followed a period of peace and amity for more than a decade (1624-1635). This period was marked by brisk trade between the two countries and exchange of ideas through good will missions between the Hajo administration and the Ahoms. Although there was no formal treaty the two sides maintained superficial friendship. Raja Satrajit, the Mughal commander of Pandu became the de facto ruler of Kamrup and through his shrewd diplomacy he managed to extend his influence upon the Barpukan of Kajalimukh. The latter was responsible for the maintenance of diplomatic relations on behalf of the Ahom Momarch with his counterpart of Hajo. The two self-seekers did a lot of mischiefs to their respective governments taking advantage of the peaceful atmosphere in the frontier region.

The end of the hostilities in 1624 was mainly

due to the out-break of the rebellion of Prince Shah Jahan in Bengal. During the remaining period of the reign of Jahangir till 1628 followed by a period of nearly seven years, neither the Subadar of Bengal nor the Emperor showed any interest in the affairs of the north-east. The Ahoms also remained at peace as they saw no immediate danger to their territorial integrity. Further, they were tired of fighting after a series of futile wars. Their diplomacy also produced a negative result as their allies had been crushed. Despite the fact that there was practically no strong leader in Kamrup to defend the Mughal frontier after the departure of Mirza Nathan and also the apparent weakness of the provincial administration at Dacca, the Ahoms did not consider it wise to launch an attack on Kamrup. This was due largely to diplomatic manoeuvres of Ratnadiit and the machinations of the Barphukan. Several attempts were made at the initiative of Raja Lakhsminarayan to restore permanent peace and friendship between the two powers. The Mughal envoy Birudaji, acting on behalf of Lakhsminarayan visited Gargaon in order to negotiate friendship. But the negotiations failed. The Ahom King did not consider the proposal seriously, probably advised by the Barphukan. The Subadar of Bengal also

conveyed his willingness to restore peace through some Assamese traders. But all these peace overtures were foiled by Satrajit and Langi Barphukan. The treachery of these two officers were ultimately detected by their governments. Langi was put into an iron-cage only to starve to death. Raja Satrajit was later on charged with treason and was executed by the Mughals.

Hostilities were renewed in 1635. The Ahoms gave asylum to few defaulting officers of Kamrup in their territory. This led to bitter conflict with the Mughals which lasted for about four years. The Ahoms were defeated and forced to conclude the treaty in 1639. This treaty, the first of its kind in the history of Ahom-Mughal relations, marked the beginning of a new era in the context of Ahom-Mughal diplomacy. It clearly laid down the boundary of the two kingdoms. The two powers now stressed the need for friendship keeping in view the observance of treaty stipulations. A number of diplomatic missions were exchanged following this treaty till the year 1658. A detailed study of the epistles brings to light the superiority of Ahom diplomacy over their rivals. The successive Fouzdars of Guwahati always emphasised the need for perpetual friendship and to act with restraint so as to avoid fresh conflict. An important feature of this period

was the rapid growth of commercial activities among the traders of the two countries. There was also a heavy influx of Mussalmans to Kamrup from Bengal.

Due to charges and counter charges by both sides the relationship gradually receded and they remained nominally at peace. It was the burning desire of King Jayadhwaj Singha to recover Guwahati and he was making all preparations to bring about such a result. Meanwhile Raja Prannarayan, taking advantage of the 'war of Succession' at Delhi recovered large portions of the former Koch territory. It was now Jayadhwaj's turn. Inspired by the success of the Koch troops and realising the weakness of the Mughals, he ordered his troops to march on to Guwahati. Thus the Ahoms achieved the desired results. At this stage Prannarayan proposed a defensive and offensive alliance against their common enemy. Flushed with victory Jayadhwaj rejected the offer. He went a step further by launching an attack on the Koches. The Koches were beaten badly and the Ahoms overran their territories across the river Sankos.

The conquest of Kamrup and the rejection of the proposed alliance was a great blunder on the part of the

Ahom King. Had there been a joint defensive alliance at this stage much of the misfortunes that the Assamese had suffered at the hands of Mir Jumla could have been avoided. King Jayadhwaj Singha failed to learn lessons of the previous Ahom-Mughal conflicts. By the conquest of Kamrup and inflicting severe damages to the Koch people he created more enemies. It would have been a wise step on his part if he could make the Koch Kingdom a buffer state. Jayadhwaj Singha acted in hot-headed manner which only betrayed his lack of political insight. He had to pay very dearly for his mistake. He repented for this blunder while he was at Nampui during the time of Mir Jumla's invasion. As events were shortly to prove, Jayadhwaj's blunder can be compared to that of Aurangzeb who also committed similar blunders by conquering the two Muslim States of Bijapur and Golkunda in the Deccan. These two states served as an effective check for the growth of Maratha power under Shivaji.

Mir Jumla's invasion was more a 'holy' expedition than an imperialistic one. He was influenced by the Islamic doctrine of 'Jehad' or holy war, as he himself said that his mission was 'to punish the 'infidels' of Assam. The destruction of a number of Hindu temples

in Koch Behar and forcible conversion of Hindus to Islamic faith were clear proof of this. His victory in Assam was due to his military skill and the entire campaign was nothing but a series of plundering raids masquerading as military exploits. Mir Jumla carried with him large quantities of gold and silver vessels, raiment, arms etc. by digging the graves (mausoleum) of the Ahom Kings. Many vaults built for the dead were unearthed by the Mughals under orders of Mir Jumla and property worth nearly ninety thousand rupees were recovered. This testifies that Mir Jumla was lured by the hidden treasure of Assam. He sent to Bengal huge boats loaded with the booty taken at Garoach, Charaideo and other places of Assam. Many gun manufacturers of gun and gun powders were sent to Dacca as he was struck to see the high quality and efficiency of Assam artillery and gun powder. The treaty of Chilarighat was a triumph of Mir Jumla's skillful diplomacy. Besides large amount of money and materials paid by the Ahoms as per the terms of agreement, Mir Jumla succeeded in securing a Ahom princess for the Emperor's harem. Nevertheless the Assam expedition was one of the least creditable episodes in Mughal history.

Mir Jumla's invasion was not unexpected and

Jayadhwaj Singha quite some time made preparations to challenge the enemy. But both delinquency and defection of some top functionaries of the Ahom force led to a series of reverses which unnerved the King. He left the capital since he considered that flight was preferable to surrender in such a great calamity. He had the firm conviction that he would be able to retrieve his position after some time.

It is reasonable to conclude that Ahom reverses in the war with the Mughals were due to the desertion of able and honest leaders. Jayadhwaj Singha lost command over his subordinates. Despite the fact that there was abundance of food and war equipments, he failed to marshall the resources to the fullest advantage. Her diplomacy also reached on low ebb during the time of Mir Jumla's invasion. Barring this temporary reverse, however, Ahom diplomacy succeeded on other occasions as revealed by the maintenance of the territorial integrity of the Kingdom.

The treachery and delinquency of some top functionaries at a very critical time deserve special mention. The wilful desertions of Baduli Bhukan and Raja Sahur Barphukan and their subordinate commanders

simply because a non-Ahom, Manthir Bharali Barua was appointed general over their head was simply reprehensible. Such an appointment might have been a serious blunder; the King ought to have anticipated the resentment of the Ahom Commanders who were highly sensitive to their rights and privileges. But their ambition and treachery got the better of the interests of the Kingdom. After the withdrawal of Mir Jumla's troops from Assam, Atan Buragohain and Khemun Fajmantri worked tirelessly to restore order and to rebuild the administration. The Ahoms ultimately succeeded in expelling the Mughals from Guwahati and its neighbourhood within five years due to the generalship of Lachit Barphukan, Atan Buragohain's statesmanship and the heroism of the Assamese soldiers.

An important feature of Mughal diplomacy of the post Mir Jumla period was the bestowal of Imperial patronage to the priests of Umananda and Kamakhya temples. It seems the Mughals adopted this policy of conciliation and gift towards these priests to gain their favour who had been exercising great influence over the Kings and their subjects. The Mughals realised that in the absence of good-will and cooperation of these priests, consolidation of the Imperial authority would be difficult around Guwahati. Perhaps the Mughals expected the priests

to act as their stooges. But the Mughals did not succeed ultimately.

During the period of prolonged conflict there had been influx of Muslim population in a steady and regular manner. The process of settlement began in Kamrup during the first phase of the contact (1613-1627). This was supplemented on a large scale during the period from 1639 to 1658. The last phase of immigration took place in 1679-1682. The process continued thereafter. The rich natural resources of Assam apparently encouraged these foreigners to come and settle in Assam. They got an easy footing in Assam since large number of Muslim population had, in the meantime, migrated to this land who gave them protection and encouragement. One of the favourite pastimes of the Mughals was the undertaking of Kheda operations in the forests of Darrang and Kamrup which were full of wild elephants. The Muslim traders also played an important role in the commercial field in Assam. In course of time this Muslim population was assimilated with the Assamese people by the adoption of local customs and manners and languages. A composite culture thus began to emerge. The Hindus and the Muslims lived in amity and peace. Muslim saints were given due honour and lands were bestowed on them to carry on their

work in ease and comfort. Religious toleration did immense good to the people.

The Ahom rulers exercised constant vigilance to safeguard freedom and national interest. Foreigners with doubtful antecedents were never allowed to acquire permanent footing in Assam. But the Ahoms accepted those who showed evidence of contributions to the national good and identifying themselves with the indigenous population. Muslim artisans were allowed to stay and settle as they proved helpful for the economic development of the land. King Jayadhwaj Singha also brought large number of Koch artisans to upper Assam. They contributed much to the economic development of Assam.

Through the social and political intercourse, the people of Assam became closely acquainted with Islamic culture, religion and polity. The Ahoms adopted a liberal policy towards the Muslim war-prisoners. Muslim artisans served in the royal army in responsible capacity. They also served as masons, engravers, spinners and workers in the state arsenals. Muslim artisans and craftsmen were incorporated in the 'Khanikar-khel' - or the guild of artisans. Many Muslims also held the posts of Bora,

Hazarika, Saikia, Barua etc. due to the role they played in different avenues of life'. Due to employment of Mohammedans on various capacities, particularly in the field of art and architecture that some traces of mughal influences can be found in the buildings and temples and few literary works of the later Ahom period. Thus the Ahom-Mughal contact in the seventeenth century brought about a transformation of the Assamese society in the political, economic and cultural fields.

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APPENDIX

Many letters were exchanged between the Fouzdar of Kamrup and his Ahom counterpart, the Barbarua. These epistles clearly reveal the state of affairs prevailing in the frontier as well as the nature of relationship between the two powers. Some of these letters are recorded in the contemporary Ahom Chronicles. Few of them are reproduced below.

No. 1

Letter from the Fouzdar to the Barbarua

To

"Hon'ble Srijut Barbarua,

I write this letter with all love and affection to you, Wish you well. I am sending three envoys, Sekmeda, Ekadah and Jharkhand to you along with your Katakis, viz., Sanatan and Kanu Sarma. For the welfare of the subject people, we should honour the treaty obligations which had fixed the Asurar Ali and Barnadi as the boundary line between the two countries permanently. You may send our envoys early after their audience with the Monarch. Details will be narrated by our envoys. - January (Mach), 1640."¹

¹Bhuyan, S.K., Kamrupar Buranji, p.43. ; Goswami, H.C., Purani Asom Buranji, pp. 132-133 (the dates of the letters shown here appear to be incorrect).

The Mughal envoys also offered rich presents to the Barbarua. They stayed in the Ahom court for sometime.

The reply to this letter to Allayar Khan was as follows -

No. 2

To

Hon'ble Srijut Nawab Allayar Khan

With you all the best. We are all well. You have rightly written that the Barnadi on the north and the Asurar Ali on the south of the Brahmaputra should remain as boundary between the two countries. We should try to uphold it. Your envoys are sent now after their audience with the Swargadeo. Kanu Sarma and Anantan Kataki who are accompanying your envoy will tell you in detail. - May, 1640.²

The Barbarua also sent valuable presents to the Nawab.

In September, 1640 the Fouzdar wrote a letter of complaint to the Barbarua and despatched his grandson Mirzavela to Kajalimukh. Precisely, the letter runs thus.

²Bhuyan, S.K., Kamrupar Buranji (ed.), p.44.

No. 3

To

Hon'ble Barbarua Gohain,
the Barphukan, the greats.

We are enjoying good health and happiness by the grace of God. Please send your Katakis to me. Sorry to inform you that your men took away some of our subject people with the presents and other articles offered by the Bhutias and the Daflas. Your people have also captured twenty three of our men near Singari Chowki in Darrang. If these things continue how will the friendly relations last? Mirzavela will report to you everything. Please see that your subjects do not disturb us.³

The Barbarua in turn sent a suitable reply through the Katakis.

Another letter from the Nawab to the Barbarua - dated, December 1642.

No. 4

To

Hon'ble Barbarua Gohain and the
Ghetia Gohain.

Wish you well. Our relations have come closer as the time rolled by. We should try to enhance our

³Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., p.45.

prestige and friendship in future. Your Katakis, Kanu Sarma and Sanatan and our envoys will report to you in detail.⁴

Thereafter Sekmeda, the Mughal envoy stayed with the Barphukan for sometime and the two whom Katakis were sent to Gargaon. The Swargadeo was very much pleased to listen from the Katakis. As desired by the Swargadeo, the Barbarua sent the Mughal envoy back to Guwahati with customary presents. This was followed by a series of good will missions, sent by the Fouzdar. The Barbarua also reciprocated his feeling through various such missions.

⁴Bhuyan, S.K., Op.cit., pp.46-47.

GLOSSARY

Ali	...	Road
Bangal	...	Foreigner who entered Assam through Bengal
Buragohain) Bargohain) Barpatragohain)	...	The three cabinet ministers or councillors, the Buragohain being the head.
Barbarua	...	Chief Secretary and the head of the judiciary
Barphukan	...	Viceroy and Commander of Lower Assam
Barua	...	Head of a mini department
Bora	...	Head of twenty paiks
Chowki	...	Frontier outpost
Dangarias	...	nobles, applies to three persons i.e. the three cabinet ministers
Deodhai	...	Ahom priest
Dhekeri	...	Koch subjects of Kanrup
Datiyal Bisaya or Duariya	...	The frontier wardens.
Duar	...	Gate of a mountain pass
Firingi	...	European
Got	...	a unit of four paiks
Hats and fats	...	frontier outposts for exchange of goods with the foreign traders
Hatibarua	...	Head of the elephant corps
Hazarika	...	Commander of one thousand paiks

Hengdan	... Ahom sword
Hengdandhara	... Sword man, holder of hengdan
Jhari	... Pitcher with a pipe
Kataki	... Envoy or ambassador, also served as intermediaries between the King and the principal nobles
Kadis	... Archers
Kheda operations	... Elephant catching operations
Khel	... A division of the population like guild
Khunlung	... Prince elder
Khunlai	... Prince younger
Khanikar	... Artisans for making gun-powder
Kukurachowa	... To examine the legs of fowls The Ahoms had the tradition to examine the legs of fowls before launching an attack on the enemies to find the omens. The Deodhai pandits could forecast the fortunes of the monarch by cutting the bones of fowls' legs.
Medamnephi	... Ahom ceremony in which oblations are offered to the dead and sacrifices to the gods
Mudoi	... Trader
Parmudoi	... Big trader, a merchant
Neog	... Naval Commander
Paik	... Adult male for state services also used as soldiers in wars.
Parbat	... Hill
Phukan	... A noble, head of a mini department who commands six thousand paiks.

Rajkhowa	... Commander of three thousand paiks.
Raja Sahur (Sasur)	... King's father-in-law
Riha and Mekhela	... Skirts and upper garments tied on the body (waist and the breast) by the Assamese women
Rikkhvan ceremony	... Ahom ceremony invoking long life or well being for all in the state
Saikia	... Head of one hundred paiks (soldiers)
Sandikoi	... Naval Commander
Swargadeo	... King of celestial origin, applied to the Ahom King of Assam
Thapita-Chanchita	... A state with subordinate position as established by the Ahom monarch.
Bamuni Putek	... Son of a Brahmin.